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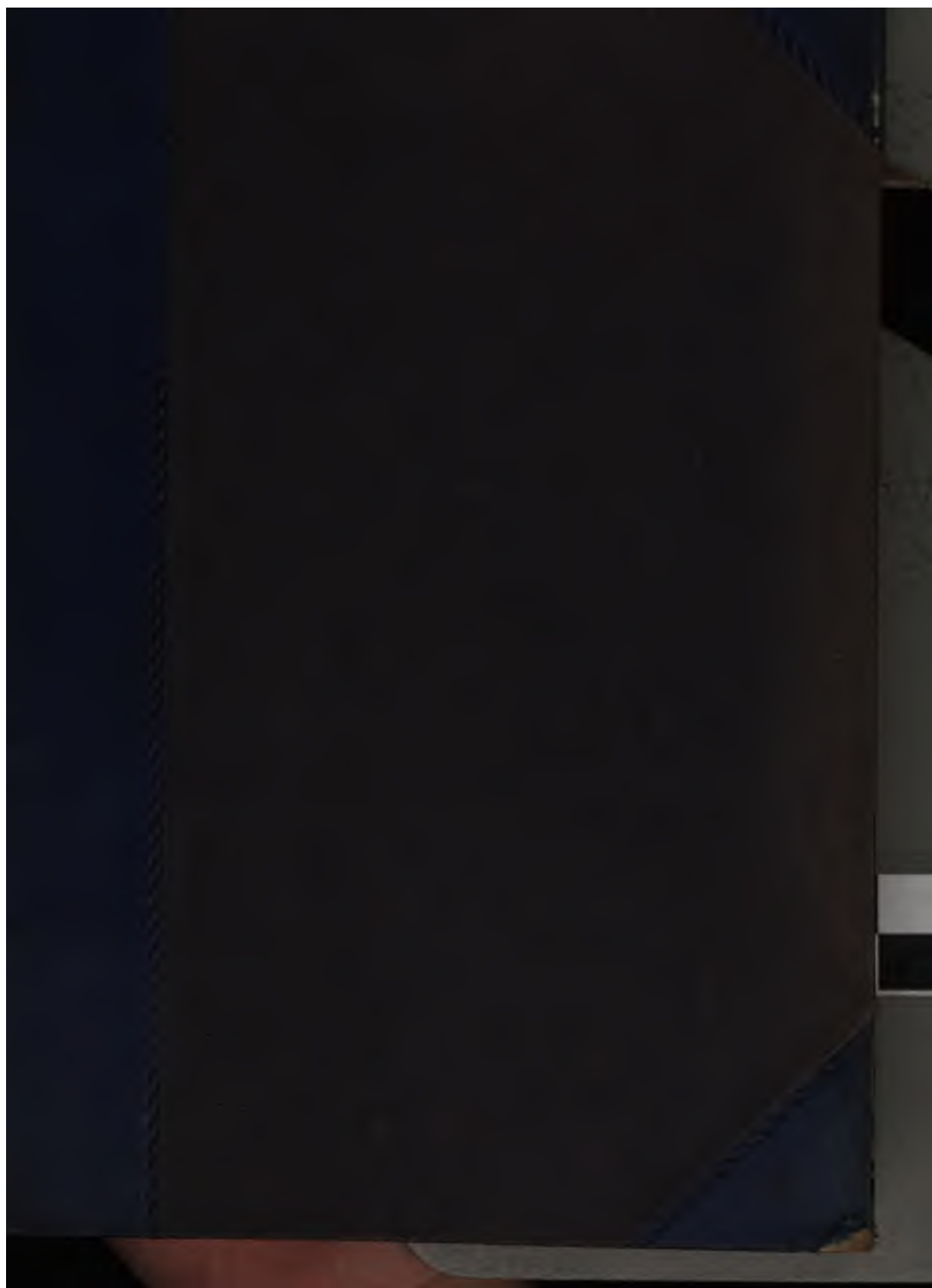
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The Chebeleyp Nobels.

SAUL WEIR.



“Go!” he shouted, the blood welling to his white lips. “They are mine; you *dares not* touch them!” — PAGE 114.

The Chebeley Nobels.

SAUL WEIR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

‘A MODERN MINISTER.’

“God appointed for him a more extended arena, and a longer racecourse,
that thou mightest the more carefully observe this athlete.”

—CHRYSOSTOM.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



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SAUL WEIR.

CHAPTER I.

KINSMEN.

THE Herongate and its estate lay outspread with right royal expansiveness, below the glorious sunshine of the brightest morning of November; its ancient architecture and old-fashioned gardens, nobly spacious, broadly luxuriant. The arms of its founder, scarcely to be distinguished for the moss and lichen, still arched the garden entrance. Two low columns bore the crest of Ipswich town,—a demi-lion rampant, *or*, holding in his paws a ship with three masts. Then, stretching away, upon either hand, were two long terraces, with stone balusters, thickly overgrown with ivy. There had been no attempt at restoration, no adding of new wings, no tacking on of incongruous enlargements since the time when Wolsey bought the property, and made good use of its garden, respecting its ancients for obvious reasons; it stood unaltered when the South Sea Director purchased it; and its owners since had not been guilty of the Vandalism of taking from or adding to its beauty. The old pile seemed verily proud of its antiquity, presenting a hoary serenity and stateliness without a peer between there and the German Ocean.

The very look of it suggested some old romance; an atmosphere of historic incident enveloped its massive precincts; it would scarcely surprise any one to hear of something strange having occurred there. Its dignified owner, if overwhelmed by surprise upon hearing of the Treasure there deposited, did not feel prepared to say that such an assertion was preposterous.

More remarkable was the coincidence of the rival claims—the meeting upon the ground itself of the two descendants. Mr Masheter certainly felt very interested, but was too piqued and annoyed to show it. That a county gentleman and magistrate should have been gulled and duped in that wholesale fashion was so extraordinary, he could only gaze at the company of schemers with the astonished indignation experienced before some more than ordinarily stupendous misdemeanour.

But there was, in his opinion, something unaccountable and inconsistent about the affair thus far. The Messrs Tomkins, and that well-known, nay, celebrated painter, surely would not lend their reputation to such paltry speculation. He was not in the least surprised when Mr Potter stepped irritably forward and demanded to know by what right the carpenter made the declaration he had done. There was something commanding about Mr Potter, while his years gave him the authority to speak. "This seems to me an almost unexampled occurrence," he said, "when a stranger intrudes upon the privacy of a country gentleman's guests, and discharges a libellous imputation of an absurd and ridiculous nature, not against any one or two particular members, but against the whole of them. The man ought to be locked up for a lunatic." Having given utterance to this indignant protest, the outraged painter strode from the room with a vastly-injured mien.

The cue of retreat thus given, the Messrs Tomkins immediately acted upon it. The irreproachable Brothers would have no more of such indecorous proceedings. Rising as by one movement, looking exceedingly aggrieved, they stepped lightly to Mr Masheter's side, where Mr Adam remarked, in a low and solicitous tone, "I am sure you will excuse our withdrawing. This is very painful. We were quite unconscious, when

consenting to stay here awhile, of the system upon which your hospitality was conducted, or we should on no account have trespassed upon your kindness. You will admit, I think, that the company is a little mixed—a showman, a carpenter, a travelling lecturer, a hatter, a gardener, a grazier, a quack-doctor. Under the circumstances of our coming here we were prepared to submit to almost anything; but when the strollers begin in a semi-intoxicated manner to revile, you cannot expect us to remain,—why, it may end in a free fight, and we are so sensitive to the least disorder.”

While Mr Adam thus earnestly vindicated their departure to the annoyed and mortified Cobham Masheter, Brothers Seth and Noah slipped two diminutive text-books out of their waistcoat-pockets, and sought to allay their ruffled feelings by dipping into diamond type. Mr Masheter, looking slightly bewildered and confused, hurriedly replied, “But you must have perceived, my dear sir, how utterly irresponsible I am for this awkward *contretemps*.”

“We cannot but feel, Mr Masheter,” said Brother Adam, sadly, “that there has been a slight breach of courtesy, after we so very earnestly represented our love of quiet. Of course an etiquette is observed among gentlemen, which has not been observed, and we feel it, Mr Masheter, deeply. The painful scene we have witnessed is so shocking, and so at variance with the harmony we are accustomed too, it will be long before its impression wears off. Our lives are singularly peaceful and retiring, and to be betrayed into the very centre of jangling discord is a blow we shall not easily recover. This extraordinary meeting of mechanics, strolling players, vagabonds, and scoundrels generally, is one of the sights we are happily spared looking upon in our secluded method of living. Allow me to say, on behalf of my Brothers and myself, we bear you no ill-will, while we do most sincerely sympathise with you.”

The squire was goaded past all bearing. With unwonted excitement, for him, he said warmly, “Whoever has entered my house honestly is a gentleman, be he carpenter or what

not. It is the liar and hypocrite who is unworthy the name of man or gentleman."

The Brothers looked very shocked. "He will be swearing in a moment," Mr Seth murmured, audibly; "we had better be going. We were never in favour of these democratic meetings," to Mr Masheter.

"Good gracious! no more am I!" exclaimed that gentleman, who prided himself upon his staunch Conservatism.

While the Brothers were taking their departure, Saul Weir and Merry Tattergast interchanged explanations in a low tone.

"I knew there were two branches of our family," said Merry, "and was prepared for running some day upon a fellow of the same name, but I did not imagine he would bring a fortune with him."

"Nor has he," said Saul, quietly. "I merely thought it advisable to acquaint the present owner of this estate with the record left by his predecessor. When I learnt of the horde that had assembled upon the very ground, I felt more than ever disposed to do so."

"And very properly. What steps do you intend taking?"

"Requesting Mr Masheter to act as he thinks best. I was not in favour of countenancing removal of the Treasure, but since it has lain so long, I would have suggested leaving it to its rest, where it need not trouble anybody. The site of its deposit being now generally known, however, I think it better to take possession—if such a Treasure exists, which, to tell the truth, I am very incredulous about."

"I hope not," said the other, whom we beg leave to speak of by his masquerading name, to avoid confusion. Merry's fancy had been richly wrought upon by the strange piece of fortune; golden visions opened to him, through which he flitted more butterfly-like than ever; while the queen of those quick-passing dreams was of course his Jessie, and all that he proposed to perform for her happiness would take too long to describe.

"Pray don't set your heart upon it," said Saul, honestly solicitous that his newly-found relative should not be disappointed.

"An old experience; I shall recover the shock," returned Tattergast, with comical gravity.

Further conversation was interfered with by a commotion at the door, where Jebeson and Crick, attempting to pass out, were deftly caught and held by the two officers waiting in the passage. Jebeson knocked his man down without loss of time, then helped Crick at tripping the other, and before Saul could be of use the rascals had made off, past the dismayed domestics, and beyond the Herongate precincts. Had he been so minded, Saul could have followed them, and would not have done so for nothing; but with a disgusted shrug of the shoulders, he left the matter to the police, which of course is equivalent to saying it was left altogether. Other duties engaged his attention, which he wished to get through quickly, and return to his business in London. Entering the dining-room, he begged a few minutes' conversation with Mr Masheter, requesting that Mr Tattergast might also be present. The former gentleman immediately led the way to his study, and when they were seated Saul began at once to state his wishes respecting the Treasure.

"I ask your sanction to have it ascertained whether there really is any valuable deposit beneath that tree, Mr Masheter."

"Most certainly; I am very desirous of knowing. I shall be pleased to render you every assistance in my power."

"Many thanks. I do not disguise my doubts, however. From all I can gather, old Mr Weir's peculiarity of conduct towards the end of his life was exceedingly marked; one instance of it is afforded by the eccentric clues furnished for the benefit of posterity. It seems to me inconceivable that one of these should not before this have led to the discovery and removal of the Treasure."

"I cannot understand a man of Mr Weir's reported shrewdness leaving such a number of clues," said Mr Masheter, dubiously.

"Well, of course, his mental derangement accounts for it," said Tattergast. "It is difficult for me to realize the feelings of a miser, but he may have been pricked in his conscience, willing to retrieve the past, yet fearful of confiding directly in

any one. That he was an unhappy, distrustful, solitary man, his miserable death proved. In such a frame of mind he may have trifled cunningly with the mercenary and avaricious, yet all the time have had regard to his son's descendants."

"My time is rather limited," said Saul, in a tone denoting equally unconcern and impatience. "Perhaps it will be as well to have it settled one way or the other."

Mr Masheter looked surprised at the indifference displayed. "It is evident Mr Weir's descendant is not of mercenary and avaricious type," he said.

"I don't know," answered the carpenter, pleasantly. "I came down here to thwart a legion; if that does not indicate cupidity, tell me on't."

They proceeded to the lawn, noticing upon their way thither that Mrs Steele alone remained of all the squire's influx of visitors.

Wilson, the confidential attendant, and the gardener, were set to work on the lawn, and having removed the turf strip by strip, they commenced digging down into the soft rich soil, their work being watched by the two young men with intense interest.

Asking to be excused, Mr Masheter joined his daughter in the house. He had caught sight of her patient face, where, reclining by the window of her *bijou* apartment, she was watching them. Her dark eyes, full of contemplative depth, rewarded him for his thoughtfulness: they were especially happy in expressing gratitude, and that harmony of the soul known as welcome. They were brilliant at his coming, whenever it was, with glad greeting and thanks. Her father took the pair of white eloquent hands in his, playfully remarking, "We are almost on the eve of a romance, my darling."

"What is it all about, papa? Please tell me."

He told her, and interest in the narration lent beauty to her pensive countenance.

"I was about to say that I am afraid these young men will be disappointed, but the remark would be incorrect; the carpenter is absolutely indifferent to this golden possibility, and wants to be away at his business even while the search is

pending. Such disregard indicates a great deal of character, strongly in contrast with the love of gold which is so marked a feature of modern life."

"Yes; I admire it," said Miss Masheter, with quiet sincerity.

"There's a solidity about him that commands respect. Principle underlies his motives."

"And the other?" asked the reflective girl, as she leaned a little forward and looked out of the window at the group.

"Buoyant as a cork, airy as a feather; convinced, if not too careless to be convinced of anything, that he has come into a very fine fortune, but by no means the person to break his heart if he doesn't."

Steadily sounded the stroke of the diggers, regularly worked their arms. The noontide sun was broad on the golden-brown of fallen foliage, on the fresh green grass, on the far-away leaves of the plantations, gorgeously coloured. They saw Wilson lean on his spade to rest, and the carpenter afterwards take it and begin with a will, while the lecturer sat on a bucket he had turned upside down, singing, and with so pleasant a look on his face it made the very sunshine more sunny. It was seen that the carpenter did as much as two: with massive pressure the shovel was sent low, raised quick, strong-handed motion shortening the work, yielding enthusiasm whether any was felt by himself or not.

His efforts proceeded without abatement, and one might have imagined him to be actuated by a passionate eagerness to disinter the Treasure. Really he was thinking but little about it: his employment for the time, he went at it with characteristic heartiness; he never did anything by halves.

"You enjoy work," said Merry, with quiet appreciation of rest.

"I do." He threw up the earth magnificently.

"Well, I have a select stock of practical qualities, but I only make a display at intervals; I don't let work trouble me, but I cordially hate it all the same."

"Every one to his taste," said Saul; "to me the chief excellence is activity."

"Too many active excellencies confuse the public, bewildered at deciding which is the most admirable, and more impressed by each striking industry aloof from its companion. I don't like laziness, but independence from work must be superb." His candid eyes were mirthfully looking down at the serious digger, to whom the fine odour of fresh earth was an incense of itself. The carpenter breathed its delicious richness gratefully. Had he not been weakened of late this occupation would have given him profound pleasure. Now and then he looked up at his negligent, newly-found connection, wondering how he got through the world with so little effort; knowing, however, that some were made to work and some to look on, and that if there were no spectators there would be no actors. He toiled away cheerfully, watching the sun on the old dial, hoping to be quickly returning to London, for he had promised Daisy he would only be absent a few hours.

Many a glance was naturally bestowed upon that fine old pile, the sometime home of his famous ancestor. Saul could appreciate its architecture, and thinking, "they don't build like that now," he took in its noble proportions with that searching gaze of his. "I should like to become the owner of this place," he said to himself, with matter-of-fact resolution.

Neither thought disturbed Mr Tattergast. The place might go if he found the money; and if not, both would be forgotten in a week.

They were now at a reasonable depth, and without seeing any sign of reward for their pains. A servant appeared with jugs of ale and glasses, sent by Miss Masheter. Two hours were gone since cutting the first layer of turf. Saul inquired if Mr Masheter was engaged. The servant replied that her master was in his study with a gentleman. It was perfectly true. An old *savant* Mr Masheter had lost sight of for many years. He was famous when they both were in their prime, and since had been little heard of; he was alluded to in the scientific journals and reviews, spoken of with respect in circles of research, but personally was a power of the past. So that when his card was brought in to Mr Masheter he read it with

surprise, and felt a thrill of pleasure, for the visit of such men confers honour.

Mr OLIVER REDLAND, B.Sc., F.G.S.,

requests the pleasure of an interview if convenient.

Mr Masheter knew that men of science, like meteors, disappear suddenly; where, the outside public may not inquire. Reason supposes to still more abstruse investigation, which, if attended with result, will startle the world when complete. And how near Reason may approach was illustrated here, when this veteran of half a century's eminence unassumingly entered into his research in the great field of Geology, than which, he said, no more fascinating or useful science existed, comprising, as it did, knowledge of all past epochs, and preparing us for all future changes. Mr Masheter thought he had not improved of late years. When he had last met him in town he was beau-like and debonair, with a crowd of honours, and fresh from the latest distinguished successes. Now he looked a little shabby—not that the squire, who was one of the hearty sort, cared for this; but there is a line drawn by social consent between retiring gentility and the undress of the scholar, and that thing without a name, decayed and beggarly, which may kindly be spoken of as “a little shabby.” Yet even this, the squire knew well, may attend long application to some cherished project, when the world and its own may go, and time flies after it, means, years, passing unnoted and unnoticed, the whole absorbing thought of the day and the decade being that bosom project. He knew this; therefore paid no prejudiced heed to the philosopher's exterior, and heard his account with kindly, ay, and gratified courtesy. He appreciated the call, as some country gentleman of culture does when a person of note looks in for a little quiet chat. The late influx of visitors, learned and otherwise, made his reception of the scholar a degree constrained. But there was no motive for this, all the world knew of Oliver Redland's sincerity and attainments; a little peculiar, possibly, of recent years; but scholarship confers that distinction with

others, and if its devotee were not eccentric and different from his fellows, why, the world would begin to doubt the scholarship. And of course Mr Masheter did not connect in the same thought, even, this grave gentleman of slow and laborious periods, and that look of profound wisdom which is an honorary introduction of itself, with the crowd of adventurers who had so disconcerted him. Besides, Mr Redland had an object in calling, connected with the pursuit upon which he was engaged—it was not an idle visit of courtesy or convenience so much as one of importance, in so far as science and its advancement is important; he called to beg the favour of the squire's assistance in helping him forward with a huge chart of the strata of the East coast, upon which he had been engaged a considerable time. There was no need to question the accuracy of this, because he had the chart with him, so far as it went. There was a queer-looking blank just about Suffolk, which made the thing incomplete, and it was over this important county, or part of it, he desired assistance.

Mr Masheter was not altogether sure that he could render this. They did some brickmaking with the clay, and some quarrying, if he might so call it, with the gravel, and the loam between was pretty well dug; but he did not remember the necessary wall whereby Mr Redland could improve his acquaintance with the depths below Suffolk. The soil in the pasture region was marl for the most part; and respecting the shell-marl, of which there were beds out Woodbridge way, Mr Redland would of course know as much as he did; the sandy land lay shorewards. Yes. Mr Redland possessed some theoretical knowledge, but earnestly desired to make practical examination, and for that purpose was doing as old William Smith did when drawing up his 'Tabular View of British Strata,' walking over the ground, and digging and delving for himself. At which the squire smiled, pleasantly remarking, "Then you are just in time, and will find the digging and delving done for you. We are treasure-hunting, Mr Redland; looking for gold while you are satisfied with clay."

"A very useful product, my dear sir; I really don't know what we should do without it. But I am interested—some

building going on? For of course you were joking just now." The calm indifference with which this was said would have satisfied a less unsuspecting individual than Cobham Masheter that this was the first word his visitor had heard about the perplexing Treasure. He proceeded to explain. Oliver Redland listened with a dryly incredulous smile. Such fable and myth, taken bodily out of the dark ages, were very well for children, but they did not do for the grown giants in science like himself. He did not say anything to discourage it, but Mr Masheter saw his opinion, and felt a little bit ashamed of himself. He went on to state, in a slightly flurried manner, how incredulous he had been, and that only the fact of the lawful owners of it being present sanctioned his countenance of so improbable a search. At mention of the lawful owners, Mr Redland's cold smile disappeared before greater intentness, and he remarked, "This ownership business seems to lend importance it might not else possess."

"They are lineal descendants of the most modern of its owners, Saul Weir, of whom you will have heard historically."

"Yes, I think I have. Wasn't he hanged for sheep-stealing? Or was it stopping the King's Mail and shooting the coachman?"

"Dear me, no! Connected with the South Sea Scheme—netted a tremendous fortune, which he is supposed to have deposited with this famous old Treasure."

"I hope the data are legitimate," said the scientific gentleman, with another touch of that galling manner denoting pity for fools and dupes.

"The data consist of Saul Weir's miserly and penurious habits, and certain duplicate instructions directing to the supposed site."

"The latter ought to be sufficient."

"That we are now about to see. You will not experience much interest; but accompany me."

"Well, if they are digging, every foot possesses interest for a person like myself."

They proceeded to the lawn. Redland took in those two men at one swift glance, his pent brows knitted, and sunken

cheeks drawn in. Looking towards Mr Masheter as he advanced, Saul Weir discovered his companion—did not feel any curiosity about him, nor detect anything uncommon—took him for the steward, or one of the other retainers, and looked back again at the excavation. This was not satisfactory; and Mr Tattergast, too excited and disgusted to sit any longer on his bucket, paced up and down impatiently.

“Here is a gentleman, Mr Weir, may perhaps save you any further labour. He has a practical acquaintance with geology, and will tell us, I daresay, whether this earth has ever been disturbed, either for the purpose of placing anything hereabout or removing it.”

The gentleman with the practical acquaintance stood by the digging, looked down it, surveyed the mound, took careful deliberative inspection of the sides, and delivered himself of his opinion thus,

“The soil has been disturbed. It reveals the contact of iron for centuries. This has evidently been removed, or it would be here now, for it is foreign metal, not native to the soil.”

The gentlemen drew nearer, looking at one another and watching the actions of the man of science, who, kneeling, examined the earth by tests, continuing in the same measured careful tone, weighing for himself as well as for them the literal accuracy of his statements.

“The presence of lead is revealed in large quantity, also foreign, removed at the same time there can be no doubt.”

“About a century and a half ago, I suppose?” inquired Mr Masheter, with intense interest.

“On the contrary, not a quarter of a century ago.” Saying which he arose slowly, looking them straight in the face for the first time. They had found the value of calling in the judgment of a man of science. Redland had spoken the exact truth, in accordance with that skilled judgment; he never misrepresented science.

“Then in that case,” said Saul Weir, calmly, “I don’t see the use of wasting any more time over it, and we owe our ancestor an apology for having doubted his word.”

This cool resolution led the others to smile in spite of the

disappointment. When he learnt something had really been there, and up to within a year or two of his purchasing the property, Mr Masheter felt a much keener interest, and was exceedingly sorry for the young men to whom it would have been of useful service. He was very sympathetic, and invited them to return to the house with him.

"And you," to Redland, "will perhaps avail yourself of the confusion to make a few quiet notes."

"Think I will; thanks," answered the old man, looking dreamily down into the hollow, looking dreamily after the receding Weirs while they accompanied their host to the mansion.

"It strikes me our late friends would have been considerably put out by this result," said Mr Tattergast lightly, making a shockingly bad attempt to disguise his own mortification.

"I confess," said the squire, "I was incredulous, not concerning its existence, but its whereabouts, quite independent of the known eccentricity of your ancestor. When I left town on account of Miss Masheter's health, and bought this property after the death of its previous proprietor, I took with it some of the servants, and these, as servants do, got talking with those I brought from town; it thus reached Miss Masheter's ear that much jealousy had existed in their previous service, through extraordinary partiality shown by their master for a confidential old servant, who seemed to be the only human being for whom he cared a rap. She attended him in his last illness with staunch devotion, allowing no one else to approach him; and this, it was said, as much by his wish as her own. He had been very good to her son,—had the boy educated, I believe, and gave him a start in life; she was strongly attached to her son, and this kindness probably had much to do with her marked service. He provided liberally for her, and after his death she departed, and, it is supposed, settled down in private life. The memorable point to which I would draw your attention is, that she took with her a small iron box, upon which she set great value, never trusting it out of her possession, and resolutely refusing to disclose the nature of its contents. The box would probably contain important papers

relating, it is supposed, to the famed Treasure. And this woman, I have no doubt, is the only person in the world—no matter the number of other clues—who possesses the true secret. A mysterious transaction: the very name of the woman is odd in itself—Noeba Edred.”

At that both Weir and Tattergast exclaimed as though knowing the name well, and then looked at one another, surprised at the mutual knowledge.

“You seem to have heard the name before,” said Mr Masheter, surprised also, and thinking the whole affair one of the most curious incidents he was acquainted with.

“I knew her at Ramsgate,” said Mr Tattergast, “lodged in her house, indeed, some little time. You have no conception of the peculiar old person she is. I am partial to peculiar people as a rule, but Mrs Edred is too much for me. And you knew her?” to Saul.

“Yes,” replied Saul, thoughtfully; “I knew her, and in Ramsgate.”

What a flood of light was cast upon events! He understood now the motive of that care towards which he had lent his own hand,—the precious freightage borne to Liverpool and placed upon board before his own eyes. And there, without a doubt, had gone the sole guidance of any service to them. He recalled her words, “Look you, I hold a secret many would destroy me for.” It was true; terrible significance dwelt upon their meaning. It seemed fatality that he of all men should have assisted in its preservation.

“I think you are right,” he said to Mr Masheter, “in your construction. Whether old Mr Weir purposed deluding adventurers, and left one direction only of any account, or whether your predecessor here had it removed elsewhere,—in either case, I think with you that Noeba Edred alone can throw any light upon the discovery; and Noeba Edred has left England.”

“Left England!” repeated Merry.

“Yes; she has gone in search of her son, for whom she evidently holds this great prize in reserve.”

“And a very nice little legacy too!” said Mr Tattergast, composedly; “only we wish this son had been hiding away in

one of our interesting English villages or towns, instead of going quite so far off. You see it will be a tolerably long time before she reaches him, granting that she is bound for that paradise of runaways, Australia."

"On the contrary," said Saul, "Mrs Edred sailed for New York."

"I very much regret I cannot help you further in this matter," said Mr Masheter, with feeling. His sympathy was warmly enlisted.

"You have already lent us your kindest aid," said Saul, gratefully.

"I should have felt more indebted, Mr Masheter, had we come into the inheritance," Merry laughingly remarked.

"I don't think the disappointment will break your heart, sir," the squire replied, in the same light spirit.

"I don't think it will; but it's quite certain finding the same would have lightened it. I am not a person of large income, and the now vanished addition would not have been in the way."

"I suppose you prefer liberty to any regular employment that would bring in a certain income?"

"I do: the lot of the despised sparrow, sir, in preference to that of the crested cockatoo." Having found the effect of this Tattergastian morality duly impressive, its droll author added philosophically, "I was nourished in my young days upon nursery ballads, and since then I have thrived wonderfully upon stout old songs of this and other lands: here you have my history in brief, with many dried flowers between the pages." He was looking down upon one in his button-hole, with a softened, almost tender expression; but it was not this so much as the plaintive tremulousness of the voice which caused the others to look and feel surprised, although each kept his feelings to himself.

Saul was very interested by this light-playing yet sometimes deep-toned relative, who had taken him by surprise in more ways than one, and whose connection he had realized with a feeling, half of startled wonder, half of pleasurable acceptance. A treasure was not so much in Saul's eyes but he would gladly share it with an amiable kinsman.

Merry, on his side, was by no means reluctant to find some one whom friendship or relationship, as the case might be, would connect with his shifting fortunes. The dignified man who had come down to Suffolk, boldly and unflinchingly, stern with his mission of truth and unsparing as an avenger (yet so little actuated by greed that he was prepared to leave the Treasure where it had been left so long, and return in humble content to his bench), could not but make an extraordinary impression upon this other, to whom money was of as little account, but in so different a manner.

Mr Masheter contemplated the advent of these descendants of the latest historic owner of the Treasure as a wrought-out design of Providence, whereby the dishonest schemes of others had been effectually frustrated. The manly air and respectful earnestness of the artizan prepossessed him strongly, and he was very willing to help them in another way at this curious juncture. He therefore said: "If money can be of any service, I shall be pleased to hand you a cheque for a hundred pounds, towards enabling you to take any steps you may think proper."

This frank generosity was gratefully acknowledged by both, and the kind-hearted squire put it into practice at once. Then he asked, "Now, will you dine here to-day, or are you anxious to be getting back?"

Saul expressed himself desirous of so doing, and Tattergast said he also would be glad to rejoin the worthy proprietor of the unrivalled Panorama. "A very honest fellow," said Mr Masheter. "I was greatly taken with his bluff sincerity, and the ready tact he displayed in at once removing his exhibition. Kindly hand him this £10 note, and say that Miss Masheter enjoyed exceedingly the views of the Continent."

Merry bowed his thanks, well pleased with the commission, and they rose to go. The squire shook both warmly by the hand, wishing them every success. In the hall they saw a woman, standing alone; around were wood-carvings, trophies of the chase, giant ferns, great slabs of curious mineral, some old engravings on the panelled oak: and a coat of arms above her head, those of Mr Weir, once owner of the mansion. She was standing admiring the old carving, with calm, ladylike indif-

ference to those crossing the hall. She looked up as Mr Masheter drew near, and with quiet good manners remarked upon the beauty of the workmanship.

"Yes, it is very fine, Mrs Steele;" then addressing Saul, the squire observed, "You will take an interest in this, Mr Weir; it was supplied by order of your ancestor, who, like yourself, was a lover of skilled work in woods."

Saul looked from the woman, upon whom his keenly scrutinizing gaze had been fixed, to the oak-carving, which interested him more.

Self-possessed, with just a suspicion of haughtiness, the gentlewoman regarded the artizan's minute inspection of the work.

The door of Miss Masheter's room was a little way open. She was seen reclining, an expression of resigned sweetness upon her countenance. She had been reading, but looking up at the sound of footsteps and voices, she saw the Weirs, and laid the book down for a time.

There were large stained-glass windows on either side of the entrance, and through one of these the man of science could be seen—yellow, purple, or blue, according to where you might be standing. Mrs Steele saw the devoted Redland very blue indeed. For the time being, it looked as though science would win after all. Oh, he was a quiet deep one, that Oliver Redland, and none the less dangerous for being so cleverly and conscientiously absorbed in science!

Examining the carving, Saul Weir stood below the quartered shield of his ancestor, again face to face with this mysterious woman, whose lineaments were so indelibly impressed upon his memory, and from whom he shrank with unaccountable antipathy. His common-sense rebelled at the feeling; if anything, he seemed to have behaved with bluff discourtesy towards her, while he was far from imagining she had wronged him. How, then, to explain that vivid unmistakable repugnance? He was not one wholly to despise such feelings: he looked up quickly, with a sharp penetrating gaze he had, and caught her unawares, saw the evil and designing spec-

ulation in her rapt contemplation of himself—the craft under the glacial cast of features, the cunning in the cold yet piercing eyes.

It did not trouble him, only—he knew her, and she was aware of it.

He did not remove his gaze, severe as justice. She drew back a step; another; receding before his unflinching, strong, stern stare. Half fascinated, she could not help looking at his face, his eyes driving her step by step backward. She had not the ignorant craftsman she imagined to deal with, but a Colossus, as far as spirit went, who would reduce her, and a host like her, to the level befitting such reptiles. Her soft, grey dress trailed the polished boards, upon which she seemed to glide, so sleek and delicately noiseless was her method of retreating. Saul kept his austere unbroken gaze upon her until she had curled and coiled in at Miss Masheter's apartment and closed the door. Then Saul turned to Miss Masheter's father, who in the minute or two this had been transpiring, was talking to Merry. "I should not like to have much to do with that person," he said, conclusively. Mr Masheter had not observed the manœuvre described, and the remark surprised him. But not being impressed by Mrs Steele himself, he thought the carpenter a very sensible reader of character, as people do when somebody else thinks as they think. It is indirectly paying one's self a compliment. And with that satisfaction the squire complacently left it.

A dogcart was waiting at the door for them, another instance of the squire's kind forethought. Soon they were driving rapidly along the pleasant Suffolk lanes—Saul singularly thoughtful, his companion, who had the reins, rattling on for the two.

"Seriously, what do you think of doing in this matter?" asked Saul.

"Hunting up the old lady and her freightage, to be sure; and when found, putting the claim, Saul Weir *versus* Hugh Edred. I think it the proper thing to do, subject to your consent; if not, he will be having out the Treasure, and squandering it without paying us so much even as the compliment

of allowing us to look on. I hope for the pleasure of your company."

"No thank you," said Saul, dryly; "I have work to do at home."

"Which, interpreted, means that wild-goose excursion-tickets are at a discount; but don't be incredulous concerning my mission. If I cross the Atlantic to do so, you may depend that I will secure our prize; and if I pass your place one day in a coach-and-four, don't feel envious."

"I will not," said Mr Weir, coolly; "and what is more, if you break down, I'll come out and mend the wheels for you."

They both laughed heartily at that, while rolling pleasantly along the hard roads.

"We shall remember our visit to the Herongate," said Saul.

"I shall never use a penny pencil without thinking of it. The best of it is, I walked into that garden a week or two ago as naturally as though it belonged to me, without the least idea it had at one time been in the family. I suffer excruciatingly from kleptomania in the matter of Tom Thumb geraniums and velvety crimson-black perpetuals."

They passed more than one fine garden during that swift drive, but none equal to the splendid ones so recently quitted.

"You have nothing to say against my project?" asked Merry, earnestly.

"On the contrary, it commends itself, for I am rather anxious concerning Mrs Edred, in whom I experience some interest. She was molested when in England by an unprincipled Mormon named Lufkin, who by some means had learnt about this Treasure, and did his best to possess himself of the iron box in which she keeps all relating to it. Unfortunately it did not occur to me at the time, but has done so since seeing her off, that this man would follow her upon board, watch his opportunity, and possibly succeed in wresting this from her. The prize is sufficiently important to make me apprehensive that violence may be used."

"I shouldn't like to catch Mr Lufkin in the act. You haven't that gentleman's portrait with you?"

Saul described the Mormon faithfully, and it dawned hazily upon Merry that he had seen an individual resembling him, although he could not for the moment remember where.

"There is one thing I cannot understand," said Merry. "Why did not Mrs Edred secure the documents about her person?—a far more safe plan, I should have thought, than the cumbersome one of bearing them about in an iron box."

"You would never get Mrs Edred to think as other people might. Eccentric and stubborn, there is no turning her upon any point; and she would hold to the conviction that her method was best, doubtless, since she took the precaution to have an outer wooden case made, so that if anything happened at sea the box would float, whereas, if secured about herself, all would stand a chance of going to the bottom. I am speaking upon supposition only, for although I made the case, I asked no questions, nor did she volunteer any information."

Saul described the peculiar formation of the case.

"It will be a precious awkward thing if it does go to the bottom," remarked Merry; "I should have to turn diver then. I've been pretty nearly all the ups and downs except that, I think."

"You seem quite enthusiastic about this expedition," said Saul, amused at his companion's ardour.

"Sir, I am burning to distinguish myself in the recovery of our inheritance. I only wish I'd known of it a little earlier. I could have spent many a summer noon arranging what to do with it."

"Mind these are not castles in the air!"

"Suppose they are; castles in the air are better than none at all; they at least lead one to look upward: and that means, very often, seeing the sun."

The carpenter nodded his head. He was practical, but he was before all things for "looking up."

"What vessel did Mrs Edred sail in?" inquired Merry.

"The Stormy Petrel."

"A bad omen. A pleasant title is a pleasing promise. Look at my prænomen. Wouldn't you expect a nice sort of fellow to follow?"

"I hope in the matter of the vessel you may be mistaken," replied Saul, serious in spite of all the pleasant smiling at the other's remark. "My friend was very determined upon going in the first vessel leaving."

"Did she know you by name?" Merry asked, struck by a sudden thought.

"Yes. Why?"

"It occurs to me she may not have heard that the Treasure was ever in the hands of one of our family."

"I do not for a moment suppose that she has."

"It makes it worse. That son of hers may indelicately consider me an impostor."

"If she has met her son he has heard of the name *Saul Weir*, and will give its owner kind greeting."

They lapsed into silence for a mile or two, pleasantly gliding over the hard road, for the Herongate stables were unexceptionably furnished, and they proceeded at a splendid pace. Both enjoyed the ride: Merry with that delighted sense of being in motion without exertion which those of his nature revel in; Saul taking pleased note of everything upon the way, from tree-clumps to cottages, as those do who love the country with a large whole-hearted admiration.

"I wish you could have had some more favourable time of year for your voyage," Saul said, with a kindly look at the bright and sanguine face beside him.

"It's of no consequence, thanks!" answered the other, lightly. "Companionship will relieve the journey of its tedium."

Saul looked at him, interested; the tone, not the words, attracted notice. "Are you married?" he asked.

"Not yet, but hope to be shortly." Then simply, with fine candour, he narrated Jessie's history. The honest confession took Saul Weir's fancy, and he was charmed by the undertone of tenderness. He was beginning to feel brotherly and full of trust towards this stranger whose destiny had crossed paths with his own. And had he not his own nursling-romance? He knew as well the charm of a sweet companionship. This sympathy would knit them closer than any old clanship. In his darling each had found the true treasure worth living for.

They looked in one another's eyes, as two honourable men will, with a fine scrutiny, reading much but disclosing more. Cordial in their liking, one for another, they could not but regret the parting so soon to follow their acquaintance. But Merry was very resolute. It seemed an imperative mission, he thought. It would result in complete success, he believed. And he had resolved upon taking Jessie with him. No monetary temptation would have induced him to leave her. He scarcely dared conceive the happiness in store for them if his errand was a fortunate one. She would encourage his progress, every rood and league. And the purpose was bereft of its difficulty by thought of her company. It was Jessie led him to adopt that sudden resolution, and she would help him to carry it out. He felt quite glad when they drew near the town, he was so anxious to introduce Saul to her. And what wondrous news there was to tell! There had been many a return home with disappointing depressing tidings, but here was a great joyous reward for all,—how she would thrill with gratitude and hope to hear it!

They arrived at the Railway Hotel stables where the horse was to be put up until the servant walked over from the Herongate.

They traversed humble streets, along lines of cleanly quiet-looking houses, with here and there glimpses of neat interiors. Children at play were tidy and respectable looking; the dogs were in good condition. Children and dogs will tell you the nature of a street without looking any further.

They stopped at one of the houses and entered: the passage was clean and inviting; from the garden at the back a current of sweet air blew through the house while they stood hanging their hats on the pegs. A door was on their right, and while Tattergast with natural eagerness caught at its handle, Saul could fancy the pretty face within. Merry opened the door hurriedly; an exclamation caused Saul to look that way—the room was vacant. Impetuously striding to the kitchen-stairs, Merry called down, "Has my sister gone out, ma'am?"

"I'll be with you directly, sir," a woman called back, and, good as her word, came at once, explaining as she mounted,

step by step, "Not long after you'd gone out to-day, an unpleasant-mannered person came to the house and demanded to see his daughter. He walked in roughly, saying he'd found her at last, and had been on the trail a long while, and ordered her to put what things she had together, without giving her five minutes to do it in."

By the time the worthy woman had got to the top of the stairs, her lodger had staggered back against the wall, utterly dumfounded and stricken with anguish; it was so unlooked for as to be almost impossible; he writhed under it, understanding but too bitterly the fulness of the disaster that had befallen him. Pale with emotion, he tremblingly begged the woman would tell him how his sister bore it—was she terrified? Did she seem overcome? Was there any violence used in making her comply?

"Your father seemed in a dreadful temper, and once I heard him swear, but I think that was at you."

"Never mind me. Was he cruel to her? Was he rough? Did he—did he lay a hand upon her?"

"Not that I saw," answered the woman; "he was sharpest with his tongue; your sister appeared more frightened than hurt. But I did just pity her, so pale and gentle-looking; to be spoken to in that furious manner was piteous."

"Tell me," he gasped, "did she entreat him to allow her to remain, or burst into tears, or kneel to him, or—do tell me all?"

His agony quite moved the woman; he was breathless and agitated beyond description; quickly as she could she satisfied him.

"She seemed turned cold all over, moved slowly as though all the life was stricken out of her, yet with a look of goodness, or obedience, or whatever it was, the like of which I never before saw on anybody's face; well, there, it made my heart bleed, and so I tell you."

Saul advanced, treading softly, and with gentle earnestness drew his relative into the little sitting-room; he saw that he was quite overcome, excited, and grievously pained. Merry sat down, leaning his head upon his hands; the room struck

awfully cold and cheerless, and the tea-things set for *one* smote him with blinding distress.

Saul scarcely knew how to comfort. Merry's was not one of the grave natures taking comfort gratefully, but an impetuous, passionate, unrestrained soul in its sorrow, and there was difficulty in approaching near to it.

He stood by him with a hand on his shoulder,—it was so firm, so true a hand, its contact seemed to nerve. "Be brave," murmured Saul; "we shall find her; I will help you to search for her." Courageous, encouraging words, they bore strength with them, and put heart into the troubled one. He caught Saul's hand, warmly pressed it, and exclaimed, "Thanks, old fellow—your sympathy is helpful. I ought not to have given way so, but you will never believe how dear she is to me. More now, I think, that I have lost her,"—smiling faintly, the pain and the smile wreathing curiously about the handsome mouth. He arose, trying to shake off the miserable feeling weighing him down, and made a sad attempt to be more at ease. An experience of this sort was so new it had upset him more than it would have done those who suffer in similar fashion at every change of the moon. But his naturally buoyant spirits began to reassert their sway with the hope of her possible recovery, to be depressed again when he thought of all she would have to undergo in the meantime. He looked disconsolately around the room: upon all sides were things that reminded him of her; and dearer than anything, her poor old work-box. Her needlework—the mending and repairing to make the most of his slender wardrobe—had been laid hastily down. "I should like to go out and have a good howl!" he said, with grotesque pathos.

"You shall go out and return to town with me," said Saul.

"I am sorry to think I cannot; even in this stress I will not treat Dobson shabbily; he has already been left in the lurch once, and—and—he was—very good—to *her*."

The quivering voice warned of his breaking down again. Saul manfully proposed immediate action on his own account. "Do you stop here, then, and I will try to serve you in London; it shall receive my first attention after I

have returned home and seen that all is right with my own establishment."

"How much I thank you! This is proving a true friend in need. And you may like her father better than I do," said he, lighter-hearted. "You're just one of the sort he wouldn't attempt to bully."

"He would not succeed if he attempted it," said Mr Weir, quietly.

"And now, how long before you're off?" Merry feverishly asked. "See, I've a time-table; let me look for the next train up."

"I know it, thanks," answered the carpenter, sitting composedly to the table and looking the teapot out of countenance. "The most inured of ambassadors, sir, is refreshed by a preliminary cup of tea."

"Do, pray, forgive me; I am so disturbed it makes me forgetful." He went to the cupboard for another cup and saucer; he had so often seen *her* do it, the action brought the colour hot to his face with its painful remembrance.

Saul's object really was to try and get Merry to take something, he knew that exhaustion renders grief more wearing.

The work-box on the sideboard above the cupboard was partly open; the gleam of her bracelet caught Merry's attention, and he closed the box,—sight of it distressed him; then, moved by a sudden impulse, he took up the jewelled ornament, holding it between finger and thumb as though but half liking it, and handed it to Saul with the curt explanation, "A lady who took a great fancy to Jessie, presented her with this while we were at Meadowford."

Saul looked at it with interest, admiring its exquisite workmanship. Examining it, he saw the royal name, ZENAÏDE, and started with astonishment at again being confronted by the mystic word.

"What is the lady's name?" he asked.

"Madame de Gonsalvo."

And while Saul returned the bracelet, he repeated that name, after his custom, to impress it upon his memory.

"If you find my Jessie before I can get to town," said

Merry, over tea, "you will tell her of my grief, and endeavour to bring her on to me, or telegraph so that I may fetch her?"

"To be sure I will; trust me implicitly."

"That father of hers puts me wholly out of temper,—an unbearable dog-in-the-manger; who won't show his daughter kindness, nor allow any one else to. How are you to manage such a being? Talk to him you cannot, approach him you may not. These disreputable parents are always turning up unpleasantly; but if they're good for anything, and a credit to a son-in-law, they studiously keep in the background." Even in his trouble there was a glimpse of half-comical bitterness, a rift in the cloud, through which shot a gleam of his sunniness.

"I think," said Saul Weir, mildly, "the man has some claim on his own daughter, even if he did cast her off; for which act it is very possible he has known keen repentance. Your proper course will be to make honourable proposal in the usual way, and solicit his sanction to your union."

At which Mr Tattergast made a wry face. "I hate anything done in the usual way," he said, impatiently; "it would detract from Jessie's value to win her mathematically."

"Then I'm afraid I shall be of little use to you. All my work is done mathematically, and its principles underlie my conduct of affairs."

Here the bereft lover became alarmed, and cried in a panic, "Anyhow, my dear fellow, so that you manage it!"

"You may depend," said Saul, smiling, "anything, whatever it is, gone about systematically, planned carefully, and finished evenly, will stand better prospect of permanent favour. And now," asked Saul further, with business-like willingness to know what they were about, "how does this misfortune affect your pursuit of Noeba Edred?"

"In no way. If I happily recover Jessie she will accompany me; if I am disappointed, I shall still go, to travel off my sorrow."

Saul handed the cheque received of Mr Masheter to his relative with the pleasant comment, "Then take the funds, which I am sure you will need in full; and if, while you

are absent, I can in a friendly way serve you by doing anything, or placing my home at the disposal of Miss Jessie, if I should discover her, it will give me great pleasure."

Merry grasped his hand much affected; the genuine heartiness of his namesake was refreshing and inspiring. As usual, Saul Weir carried comfort with him, while hope seemed born of his presence.

Returning from the station after Saul's departure, Merry looked in on Mr Dobson, to whom he had of necessity the task of telling his contemplated voyage. Having first spoken with emotion of Jessie's loss, he alluded to the other matter, without, however, bringing the subject of the Treasure into question with it; but as Dobson was present when Saul's declaration was made, he did just mention that nothing had been found. The worthy proprietor, who had been a little piqued by the extraordinary interruption, received Mr Masheter's message and recompense with every satisfaction. His objection to Merry's decision betrayed his liking for that young man, whose proposed absence he professed himself totally unable to surmount; nevertheless, seeing that he was quite firm, he exacted a promise that Merry would not wholly sever his connection with the Panorama, but give their enlightened audiences the benefit of his further travelling experience.

"You will see some queer types of people, Mr Tattergast, and some wonderful scenery, and if you can contrive to note, in the interests of the Panorama, I shall feel grateful to you." Having agreed to this, they again recurred to Jessie, and Mr Dobson was exceedingly kind in his mention of their gentle companion, to whom he was really attached. He offered Merry leave of absence until the Monday, when they opened in the town, and afterwards if his place could be supplied in the meantime.

"I will run up and see the agents. There may be time to engage a lecturer. But don't wait for me—you can go by which train suits you; Miss Jessie will be all the sooner out of trouble. You don't know so well as I do how she tried to please you and to do what's right. From the time when she

told the truth to me, of course, I could understand it all ; and I must say, no young girl placed in her position ever behaved with greater propriety or a wiser sense of correctness."

"Thank you, Mr Dobson ; I need not say how entirely I agree with your high opinion."

"Yes ; but you didn't see it as I often had occasion to. It's behind her lover's back, not afore his face, a young girl's character may be judged. All lovers, except the jealous ones, are blind, and they can't see clear owing to their fancies. Now I've never had a little quiet talk with yourself ; it's long been on my mind to have, meaning no offence, which, I hope, you won't take. Feeling a fatherly interest in Miss Jessie, I've been about making bold to ask when you two thinks of being married, because, in my opinion, if you take her again from her father's care, it ought to be to a husband's ; and you'll forgive my saying, if he won't give her away, why, I will." This genuine spontaneous protection of the absent one delighted Merry, who, shaking the honest fellow warmly by the hand, said cordially, "And so you shall, Mr Dobson ; with many thanks for this and all other kindnesses."

"Some young fellows change very much after they become rich," said Dobson, quietly, narrowly watching his companion's face, still speaking in the interests of the girl to whom he was so well and kindly disposed.

"I am not one of them, my friend," replied Merry, with a light movement of impatience at even being taxed with such a thing.

"And Meadowford?" said Dobson, meaning it to be a random shaft, and carefully observing its effect.

The colour mantled richly on the cheeks, and his eyes flashed, but it was not from the cause Mr Dobson supposed. Any reference to that place where the high-born lady and her son resided caused him invariably to feel impatient ; it seemed equivalent to putting Jessie's change to a wealthy home before him, and it pained sharply. Mr Dobson's construction was far less favourable to our friend's constancy ; he said to himself, with honest regret, "That's where he has left his heart ; I thought so all along."

"I don't think we need bring Meadowford in," said Merry, in a tone of surprise; and then, to change the subject, "You were a little startled by my laying claim to another name, eh?"

"Well, I wasn't startled, because there was money in the case, else I might have been. Hardship and heirship often run in a team. As the picture of life unrolls itself, there's many a crack in the canvas unseen by the public, and an awful want of sunshine on many a breadth of the scenery." Dobson lighted his pipe, and smoked with gravity, looking at the man in grey through the clouds of smoke he sent up every now and then. "I'm sorry to hear Miss Jessie's father is one of the unkind sort," he said; "although, to be sure, there may be a radical change in him."

"Changed radicals always make doubtful citizens, and peculiarly doubtful parents." Nothing would improve Mr Tattergast's antipathy. Dobson saw his impatience to be off, and, feeling sorry for him, shook hands, wished him success; and they parted, Merry proceeding direct to the station.

CHAPTER II.

JESSIE'S CHRISTMAS.

JESSIE, when removed by her father, as before narrated, was taken by that unceremonious parent to a house in London, several degrees worse than that where they originally resided. There had been no daughter's nice touch to make things clean and orderly, and sorely he had remarked the difference. With all his depraved manners, the inevitable concomitant of drunkenness, there were flickerings of a better taste, the remnant of an old refinement; and at such times he felt the loss of his child acutely. In his cups he was savagely enraged because she had left him; thus, between the two—his sane and his insane fermentation—the yeast of a beery resolve to have her back arose, and he proceeded to put it into execution,—with what result has been recounted. He would have met with earlier success, but could nohow keep sober to pursue it. At each town or village where tavern or hostel hung out its sign, and idlers were hanging about under it, he would join them, to treat or be treated, and silence every noisy crew with his ribald shouting. At times the pale pensive face of his dead wife confronted him, awfully distinct, when he would drink it out of remembrance. At others, Jessie's lovely countenance was reproachfully vivid, when he would drink it into obedience, and vow, if he caught her, he would make her smart for looking so dolefully at him. He did not lead a pleasant life of it, but had recently come into congenial occupation, and on the strength of it, and the strength of an arrangement with his employer, he was more than ever

resolved to recover possession of his daughter. What the arrangement was we will now proceed to show.

A certain suburban place of public entertainment, devoted to the low concert-room style of recreation, with tea-gardens, skittle-alley, quoit-ground, boxing-saloon, and shooting-gallery, required an energetic *factotum*, who could drink hard, swear, keep order, take the chair, sing a comic song, wait at table, turn a man out, and in other ways make himself useful, without being above or below his sphere. This valuable member of society, our Jessie's father, obtained the vacant post, greatly to his satisfaction; and at a confidential interview with the amiable proprietor, holding each other up, lest either rolled under the table, the girl was spoken of, her attractions dwelt upon, and double salary promised, on condition her services were engaged for that establishment. And really her father did not see why, as she had taken to the public entertainment line, those services should not be of benefit to himself, who had most right to them.

This was the purpose opened up to the shocked child after their arrival in London. She had not at the time overcome her intense grief upon being torn from the protection of her more loving and more kind companion; and that odious proposal, following so quickly, made her wish herself in the silent grave beside that dear dead mother. An awful fright had seized upon her—a consternation that struck her dumb—that day he had walked in at their peaceful lodging and bade her leave the house at once, and accompany him to London. So overwhelmed with sorrow and fear was the poor girl, she never thought of placing their savings somewhere for Merry to find when he returned. Alas! she could only think of his distress when, upon coming home, he found her gone. It made her tremulous and exceedingly nervous, so unexpected was it, so utterly unlooked for, with its train of unhappiness in store. Degraded time dragging its weary course, in place of those fleeting restful days that had passed all too swiftly, and now seemed like a dream—a calm and blissful dream. With the sound of her father's voice all vanished away, the instant she heard it in the passage; while a host of cruelties rushed in

upon her, remembered of old. Spell-bound, she could not move while he was asking for her; and when he entered the room—with his own timorously-remembered tread, so different to Merry's light step—she could only sit and gaze up in his face apprehensively, her large moving eyes pathetically indicating fear, a timid pleading look over all her face; fingers clutching her needlework, as though for protection, because it was something of *his*.

By no means a person to stand for sentiment, her father seized her by the arm, yet not violently; he would get her to London first. But her mournful prettiness touched him. He had not particularly noticed it before, but she struck him as really pretty, and he resolved he would stick another half-sovereign per week on that arrangement.

He gave her little time to bundle her few things together. An old felt hat of Merry's was on the sideboard, and stooping to the cupboard underneath, she kissed it. Some dead flowers, taken out of his coat the day before, were on the mantelpiece; she caught them up and concealed them about her. She went an instant into the bedroom she had occupied, and fell upon her knees, breathing a quick prayer for strength. Then she went to her father, pale and calm, with a grateful glance at the woman of the house—ay, and at the house itself,—when she turned to take a backward, tearful look.

We have often noticed some little girl's wondering caress of a babe—a waxen animate doll to the child, surprising her by its life, and captivating her by its smiles: fully as innocent, and almost as wondering, had been Jessie's enjoyment of the new, unruffled, halcyon time, broken in upon thus sternly, and, as it seemed, at an end for ever. Poor girl! What would she have thought had she known of Merry's contemplated journey to that far-distant West? Love had been no little to her! Little! It was the universe.

She hoped they were going to the old place; she knew Merry would take steps for communicating with her. Having been so accustomed to travelling with him, this enforced journey with another so utterly unfeeling caused her to experience a thrill of aversion, for which she sat reproaching

herself all the rest of the way. Jessie was no disobedient daughter, and did not accept Merry's brotherly protection in preference to living with a good father, but as escape from a very bad one, whom she had borne with until past forbearance. We who have not endured the life her girlhood had known, may not blame that appreciation of loving care, that longing to be at rest. No child ever yearned more to be taken to a father's heart, or valued more highly the inestimable gift of parental love; when this was denied her, and unusual unkindness was received instead, her soul seemed shrivelled by it. With Merry's love she lived again, revived as drooping flowers revive—felt that the world held something for her besides blows and bitter words, and became stronger with it and more beautiful: so does it ever blight or nurture these fair young lives.

She was taken to some wretched rooms not far from Astley's Amphitheatre, Westminster Bridge Road. An indefinite number of other lodgers were on the high brawl. The place seemed consecrated to dirt and disturbance. With a shudder she crossed the threshold; with a shudder she mounted the grimy staircase. A red-haired woman, with a black eye, darted out of a side-room after an infant straggling down-stairs; she stopped and gazed at the girl as at an apparition; her beauty and refinement were conspicuous in that place. The sad eyes of the girl drooped, while she walked quickly after her father, up another flight of stairs. A stupid-looking navvy slouched from another room with clownish gait and an impudent leer. Shivering slightly, Jessie followed her father, who entered a room, the door of which, down its panel, was dirty with grubby finger-marks. Within, the accommodation was of the meanest: dirt and disorder still prevalent. Some rush-bottomed chairs, a rickety table, shelves with crockery, a carpet from which all pattern had disappeared, a dusty window-blind,—the window looking upon a horrible yard, and a sectional outlying plan of other horrible yards. These comprised the features. Noticing something in her look unappreciative of the region to which he had brought her, Jessie's father explained, quite in a tone of congratulation, "It's only a make-shift, my girl. We'll

soon get into something better, when you help me at earning a little money. I'm making a desperate effort now, Jessie, to live respectably and gain a trifle for ourselves, and if you'll join me in it, we shall do very well."

"You know, father, it was what I always wished for, and tried my best to do."

"Yes. Well, come Boxing-day we'll begin a more prosperous life. I've an engagement extending over the Christmas holidays, perhaps altogether, for you and myself, which ll bring us in something considerable, if it pays as we expect. Only you'll have to get out o' that shy diffident manner of yours and learn to look people in the face, confidently and with assurance, else you'll be no good for this engagement."

Jessie listened with a vague sense of dread. She did not know what it was and did not ask, but realized that something was about to be required of her, and dimly shunned it, fearful of its nature. But one duty was pressing upon her anxiety that seemed an immediate one, and devoutly she hoped to be able to put it in execution. With this intent she asked, "I trust you will let me write to my friends at Ipswich, father? They have been very good to me, and I should not wish to seem ungrateful."

"I forbid your doing anything of that sort; it's a low connection I can't approve of for my daughter; and if you don't stop it, look out for the consequences." This was uttered in a tone of surly menace, to which she had been but too long accustomed, and the memory of what it had often led to chilled her by the anticipation. Still Jessie prayed that accident would admit of her performing that kind and solicitous deed; but accident was obstinate, as it very often is, and she was prevented by the close watch he set upon her.

She grew more thin, more delicate-looking, more like her dead beautiful mother, and the resemblance goaded him—it was so like a living, lingering reproach; and under it he became as unkind and inhuman as ever, ferocious at times, making her quake before his bullying threats, indurate as iron to all her pitiful pleading looks, savage because she seemed to be losing the fresh pink beauty which he meant to play as a great card.

Jessie suffered terribly, yet strove with so fair a desire to be dutiful, and to act with seemly obedience; forgiving his unjust abuse, preserving as pleasant a mien as she possibly could, and in every way removing, on her part, all cause for irritation. She had never tried more cheerfully to win his favour and arouse some little approbation. But he was obdurate as a mule, except when he had been drinking; then he would appraise her attractions with enthusiasm, tell her she should be a lady yet, drive a tandem to Epsom, and set her poor father up in the world. Jessie heard these uproarious maudlin exclamations with a trembling sense of their meaning, but still shunned thinking of it; and she tried still harder to please him—she might, for all she knew, have to plead piteously later on, and she sought by every innocent contrivance she could bring into requisition to soften his hardness of heart. He noticed it all, and cunningly gave in to her a degree, pretending to be mollified by her assuasive manner, and he swore less, grumbled in the back-yard to himself, smoothed his scowling frowns, and poor Jessie did really think she had made an impression at last. "Oh, if I could only get him to be kind!" she said to herself, her heart hungering for his love, for some gentle usage. She felt more isolated now than ever before in her life. It was impossible to hold a word of intercourse with the girls and women of the house, they were so rough and low in their manners and talk. Next to Merry, she thought most frequently of that great lady who had manifested so much interest in her; and sometimes of the gentle young florist, sadly feeling how much she would appreciate even her friendship in this time of loneliness and sorrow.

Jessie had in her life passed many an unhappy Christmas, but never one so overshadowed as that of the year we describe.

And this of all days was chosen by her father for his revelation. She was to appear at a Music Hall, in a variety of ways to fascinate its patrons, to make the place popular, to court the public favour, and by the graces of her appearance put money in his and her own pocket. "It don't matter what in the world you do, Jess, so that you make money. That's what we live

for. One makes it this way, another that; *how* doesn't signify so long as it is made, when, by means on't, you can repent of the making it. This is the order of the day, my gal. And it's no use your acting fastidious when your poor father has been conductor on a 'bus, bottle-washer on a steamboat, card-seller at the races, drover for a cattle-dealer, merchant in penny-windmills, and door-porter to a linen-drapery palace; sold hat-guards at the boat-race, and tickets for a teetotaller's lecture, at which time, I recollect, I was so drunk I was going to hand the tickets to the publicans, for, on my life, I couldn't tell one from t'other." And with a broad laugh of hilarious enjoyment at the remembrance, he clapped his leg with his hand terrifically. Jessie's feeling upon hearing the disgraceful proposition was one of blended loathing and fear. Surprise it was not, she had been so prepared by indirect allusions: but how she seemed to age under its hideous realization. What can shock, really shock, a young girl more than awaking to the consciousness of life's extraordinary machinery? An unveiling of strange dark thwartings of good; a disclosure so dimly uneven and shattering, all beautiful trust and simplicity seems dead.

She said nothing, but with pale, quivering lips, sat perfectly still, and for any change that he saw might not have heard. He turned impatiently, "Did you, or did you not, hear what I said?" he asked, angrily.

"Yes, I heard." Said calmly, yet with a deadly composure more eloquent than open agitation.

"And you are going to obey?" Asked in a tone of voice which signified that she would be made if she refused.

"No; I am sorry, but I cannot obey."

"Oh, you—cannot. Well, I think we'll see all about that. You needn't try to come airs of this sort after roaming the country with a young play-actor."

"Hush!" she said, compressing her lips, rising slowly, and, as though in pain, confronting him. "No more. With that *you* had nothing to do after turning me out of my home. He was a gentleman, and if you press your purpose I will return to him." The man whistled shrilly.

"You'll return to him? Oh, you will? Humph! But you're making a nice warm nest for yourself, you are."

"Have I not tried to be all to you a daughter should?" she asked of him, in a voice of agony.

"No, you haven't. Does a daughter who conducts herself as she should do elope with a wandering vagabond who hasn't a pillow to lay his head on?"

"Silence!" she exclaimed, with awful sternness. "Leave him alone."

"If I wouldn't let you in, it was your duty to sit on the step until I did."

"No," she said, with infinite sadness, "that was not my duty. I think it would be hard to say what my duty was. Certainly not to wait on your drunken pleasure."

He had driven her a step too far. She had turned at last, and he cowered before the flashing eyes and the slight form standing indignant and solemn.

Her attitude aroused the stubborn brutishness within him, and he thought of a method of humbling her more poignant than blows.

"Look you here, Miss Jess, I'll make short work of it. There's a law in this land that deals briefly with any man who decoys a girl from her home. I'll put on my hat and go to the police. Once set them on the trail of your friend, it won't be long afore he's safely lodged in jail."

He put on his hat, and Jessie, who had stood as though changed to marble, staggered feebly towards him while he drew near the door. Then she slowly knelt to him. She raised her clasped hands with weak terrible pleading, her eyes big with dry tears agony would not permit to pass.

"Do not go," she faintly implored, her fear for *him* greater even than her suffering.

"This minute,—unless you consent to the Music Hall scheme."

An instant wildness of the beautiful eyes, a horrible fluttering of the heart, and great trembling. "I consent," she murmured, and then fell senseless on the floor, a thin curve of blood tinging her ashen lips.

It was well her lover did not know of it. He had toiled wearily, by day and by night, in his search. And all the efforts of himself and Saul, and those that they employed, had failed to discover her. Sick at heart, and forlorn to a degree, Merry began to believe her father had not taken her to London after all. Meanwhile the day of his departure drew near, and he looked forward to it with relief.

When Jessie came to herself she was lying upon the bed, and alone.

The horrible scene came back with scathing distinctness; it chilled the returning life.

The harsh voice still rang in her ears, she saw again the passion-distorted features.

Consciousness of what she had pledged herself to arose like a grim satanic picture. Her very breathing was stayed before it. She would lose her lover, lose herself, by the act, but save him from disgrace.

How very dear he seemed to her now that she was about to sacrifice herself for him! Old kindnesses, tender deeds, softly spoken sympathy, all the rich wealth of his loving regard for her, became finely clear—nothing was forgotten, memory was too attached to them to let one single cherished recollection escape. And what had she consented to become? Nay, it had to be realized, utterly. The gazing-stock of a licentious and ribald company, the object of insult and familiarity, exposed to jest and infamous banter, the living yet dead temptress; and she smiled to herself with icy pain, white with great weariness, looking upward to the sky—a cold, clear, December sky, without any hope in it.

Why did not Merry come to her and release these agony-lines? How she yearned for his coming, and felt that she would so gladly give up life to be taken away for a few short hours! Her soul seemed as though it would give her no rest until he came to her or she went to him.

She had not the strength or courage to move a limb, only asked to sleep, or die; anything to forget.

She heard men's footsteps mount the stairs and stop at her door, heard it unlocked. The men entered, and this aroused

her to shocked surprise. It was her father, and the wretch with whom he was under engagement. They carried a trunk and a bandbox. The father went down to pay the cabman with a half-crown handed him by the other, who was left alone with the daughter, at whom he took a long, hard, critical stare, while reflectively jingling the other pieces of silver in his pocket. He was a thick-lipped, bloated-faced, bleary-eyed publican and sinner, who ought long ago to have been sent to the shambles and slaughtered for his animalism. He was smoking a hideous little clay-pipe, as disgusting-looking as himself. He was clad in large square-checked cloth, and wore an enormous pine-patterned muffler around his precious neck. He spoke hoarsely and with besotted negligence, yet with a manner he took to be sweetly persuasive and conciliating.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Miss. I hope we may become better friends." Hiccough.

Jessie drew herself up, slightly and insufficiently noticeable to give offence, and slowly quitted the room. She still felt dreadfully ill, and unequal to playing the interesting *débutante* expected of her.

She retired to the other bedroom, sitting down with a jaded and listless air, while an inexpressible mournfulness took possession of her.

She heard her father's footsteps again, and he shortly afterwards came in with the contents of the trunk and bandbox. Stage-dresses and ornaments; flaring-coloured, indecently-fashioned costumes, with musty-smelling, artificial flowers, and sham jewellery, loudly vulgar: the prince and page fittings of burlesque, with captivating head-gear, and silken hose and doublets, that might have been made for the symmetrical figure before him.

"Put 'em on; he wants to see which becomes you the most!" Saying which her father threw them on the bed, and then returned to the publican, who was drawing the cork from a bottle of port.

Her father had closed each door, and sat down to gather his employer's opinion while they drank their wine.

Jessie, the instant her father had closed the door, cast a look of surprised scorn at the costume she was expected to appear in, and without a moment's hesitation, dressed herself, instead, in her walking apparel, took Merry's and her own poor savings, and, quickly as her strength would allow, walked down-stairs and out at the door, where she saw the cabman removing a nosebag from the head of his horse.

"Great Eastern Railway?" she asked, breathlessly, with a hand on the door. He nodded, and advanced to close it, while she took her seat, trembling with agitation. He fastened the door with a bang that sent the blood rushing to her face with timorous apprehension. How aggravatingly slow he seemed while mounting to the box! She dared not glance at the house, lest she saw them at door or window. Every foot-step on the pavement, each roughly-speaking voice that passed, vibrated and thrilled her with terror. At last the man drove off quickly, and she thanked God in her heart that he did so. She was of high principle, but she broke her promise without compunction, and fled as a sacred duty.

The man drove her to the Great Eastern terminus, at the fairest rate of speed a worn-out hack was capable of proceeding. She hurriedly gave the driver his fare, and ran quickly round to the booking office, where without hesitation she took a ticket for Ipswich.

Being Christmas-day, the train was full of people returning after their festivities to their homes in the eastern counties. Their eager impatience to get to their journey's end made this poor lonely one feel very heavy-hearted; for how did she know but that *her* friends might have gone on, and she have another long and weary journey to perform! But love supported her—love which has no grave doubts to harbour, nor any unkind realisms yet made known. She was travelling to the awakening from her first fond dream.

And Jessie bore no resentful feeling with her, notwithstanding her father's conduct. The fine retaliation which yields a prayer's forgiveness filled the girl's heart.

She had passed through one of those solemn moments when

the machinery of the body stops suddenly, and there is an instant hush; when the soul is discovered, grand in awful solitude, aloof from the whirl of life, sad with intense dejection. After this experience there is no bearing resentment.

Upon arrival in Ipswich, she hastened to the lodgings where they had resided. She had come as much to save Merry as to ask him to save herself, and every minute was of consequence. The moment she entered and saw their old sitting-room door open, and strangers within it, her heart sank; she felt he could not be there. The landlady came to her, smiling gladly at seeing her again, and making her go into the little back parlour that looked out on the pleasant garden; then she took the trembling hands cordially, and affectionately kissed the grateful girl upon the cheek. It was all humble, lowly, sincere; none dare say how welcome at the moment. She made Jessie sit down, and in a hearty, joyous manner said to her, "It does me good to see you back—but how thin and sadly! Your brother was fearfully cut up, and left at once: but you shall stay with me; the rooms you had are let."

"Where—is—he?" asked Jessie faintly, her hands laid earnestly on the woman's arm, her tearful eyes looking pleadingly up to the broad kind face.

"He only told me he was going on to London directly; and I've seen no more of him since."

"In London," murmured Jessie with dreamy pain, "to look for me. And I dare not go back to look for him." Then she wistfully, imploringly begged this of the woman: "I should like to go into our sitting-room, and be there by myself a few minutes. Would your lodgers allow it?"

"I am sure they will. I'll manage it for you."

She went and managed it, returning to say the room was vacant. Jessie entered softly and closed the door, looking around with the startled and stricken air experienced on shadowed ground. There was little left to tell her of him,—the flower-pots at the window with shrubs his dear fingers had idly trifled with—the easy-chair and footstool he had used—the place where he had been wont to sit at table; she knelt down there, her clasped hands resting upon it, the devout

face bowed over them, and prayed that he might be comforted if in trouble on her account.

Then with a last look, a last fancying him in the many graceful attitudes here and there about the room, she left it with regret.

"Thank you, I may not stay," she said to the woman, who pressed her to remain. Jessie believed her father would be after her again as soon as he discovered her absence.

There was not a moment to spare, and gratefully thanking the woman, she next called on Mr Dobson, and was fortunate enough to find him at his lodgings. Mr Dobson of course could tell her more about Merry's actions, as soon as his pleasure at her return would permit him. The good man's bluntness was never in more refreshing condition; he was spending a quiet Christmas all by himself, over a punch-bowl formed of a large yellow basin, which was the best substitute the people of the house could find for the classic vessel. Into this he had scientifically cast the ingredients composing the nectar, according to Dobson; and he was quaffing the steaming delicacy while he ran his eye proudly over the proof of a new long bill he was getting out for the Christmas holidays. He had partaken sufficiently of his well-brewed beverage to make him extra plain-spoken, kind-hearted, genial-mannered; and his delight upon seeing Jessie was exuberant. It all jarred upon her terribly: everything appeared to go against her: she would so much rather have found him as of old, for it seemed to change even him.

"Now sit ye down, Miss Jessie, and let's talk comfortable. You can't want to be off again to-day, and I know my landlady has an empty room or two. Pass me yon wine-glass, and I'll get you to taste my mixing; it'll put a little colour in those pale cheeks, I warrant me."

"No, thank you, Mr Dobson," said Jessie, sitting down, burning with impatience, cold though she might be in appearance.

"Well, of course you're eager to hear about Mr Tattergast. Briefly, Miss Jessie, he is, I believe, about to come into a big fortune. I don't know how much, nor anything about it;

but I've a shrewd suspicion it's that is hurrying him off to America."

Dobson was communicative, openly frank to any extent, ready to imagine anything he did not know, and to tell everything he did. His heart warmed over the punch, and he felt very chatty.

The effect of his rambling information upon that poor girl was disquieting in the extreme; it environed her with consternation. That her Merry—her dear, poor one, doubly dear for being knit by a common vagabondage—should be removed above her by wealth, and apart from her by an ocean, was what she had never thought of in her most dread excitement.

"Merry going to America!" she murmured. "Please tell me more, Mr Dobson."

He did not want pressing; he considered it his duty to acquaint her with all upon which he was himself informed. "It turns out, you know, that Tattergast isn't his real name, which rather surprises me, for, joined to his superior address, it always gave me an impression of the aristocratic, which is more than can be said of his real name, a plain four-lettered W E I R. What do you think of that? A come-down, ain't it?"

"Never mind the name, please, Mr Dobson."

"Oh, certainly not, if you don't; it's of more consequence to you than me." Then, seeing her blush prettily: "I do declare the bouquet on my punch has warmed up the old fresh colour. Well now, my dear, I won't tease you. He was downright broken-hearted about your disappearance,—gave up all his time to the search for you, and failing, as he had to go to America, thought the change would wear off his grief; in which I agreed, although sorry enough to lose him, as you may be sure."

The beautiful colour deepened with that glimpse of a happier solution. "Would Merry not have gone if he had found me?" she asked, thoughtfully.

"He would have gone, and taken you with him; that was his intention."

How grateful she felt for that.

Dobson was fishing up slices of lemon with his ladle. He

gravely remarked: "I ought to tell you that I taxed our friend about that Meadowford suspicion you and I were talking over, and I observed him closely, not with the most satisfactory result. There's something, I know. It would downright grieve me to see you make a mistake, my dear,—I mean, marry this young man if his heart isn't wholly your own."

"I think it is, Mr Dobson," she said, looking down, her lips quivering.

"I thought it was; but, upon my word, I don't know what to think now. His manner was most peculiar the other day."

Jessie could bear anything rather than the thought of this. She rose in great agitation, with her lips compressed, her hands one upon the other over her heart, and she stood with that fragile dignity at times coming to her.

"Tell me when he sails, the ship he sails in, if you know it?"

"To-morrow morning. In the *Gay Gallant*."

"To-morrow morning," she gasped. "I want to go to him. I shall have barely time."

Mr Dobson arose also. "If you do, I'll go with you; it is not proper for you to travel all that way alone."

"Oh no, thanks; I am becoming fearless. I shall manage; only let me go now."

"Certainly, if you are determined. I'm sure I don't know whether to say go or stay. You might perhaps be in time, and if so, it would be as well for both. Take this if you won't let me go, and I wish you a happy ending to your journey." Dobson, who was troubled and affected, placed some money in her hand, but she gently and gratefully put it back, saying—

"I have enough, thank you, left from our savings."

How a heart throbs angrily when there is the least slur cast upon that heart's idol! Jessie could not take assistance from anybody casting a doubt upon one loved, known, and trusted as Merry was.

Still Jessie liked Mr Dobson much, and felt extremely grateful for his kindness. She had not so many friends that

she could afford to feel offence, however much she might feel hurt.

Taking farewell of Mr Dobson, Jessie next walked on to the station, and she caught the last train to town.

Horribly worn and fatigued, she was supported by her hungering desire to join Merry before he set out on that dreadful voyage, as it seemed to her. In spite of the wounded feeling at the bare suspicion, Dobson's doubt rankled, and she was the more anxious to meet him. She depended upon catching the night train to Liverpool, and arriving there before daybreak. She was doomed to a sad disappointment, losing the train by half an hour. This caused her grievous sorrow, there were so many hours to wait,—it was such wretched waste of time when her whole future happiness might depend upon saving that vessel's departure. There was no help for it but to remain somewhere until six o'clock the next morning, when the first train left London for the great northern port. She went to a neighbouring hotel, informed the attendants of her losing the night mail and approaching departure by the morning train, and was shown to a comfortable apartment, where some tea and bread-and-butter were brought to her. When the servant came up to clear away, Jessie asked that she might be called at a quarter past five. Thus her hours of rest would be few, but she was glad of those, so unutterably sick and tired was she of this memorable Christmas-day. She rested upon the bed with a racking headache, tearful eyes, and a sad sense of dreariness and woe. Soon she fell asleep, when her sorrows were forgotten, and she was back with him, and happy.

While this was the simple story in London, Saul Weir and Merry spent Christmas evening together in Liverpool. At the earnest request of Merry, his relative came purposely to see him off on the morrow, and this evening had something almost of solemnity about it. Like the dividing line between an eventful past and a possibly far more eventful future, it seemed fitting they should pass it in the company of each other. Merry's failure with regard to the discovery of Jessie made him unhappy. If he could only have known that she was being treated kindly and was well, he would not have minded

so much; but the uncertainty respecting her fate preyed upon him, and he would have wished for a far more contented feeling to commence his expedition with. Saul's practical sympathy was of the healthy type which countenances more active expression than mumbling some copy-book phrases or sitting and staring stupidly. He had personally walked about London in his relative's interests, and fruitlessly: he could only render this last attention of seeing him off.

"I should like to see her come running up just in time to go with me!" said he, his heart beating quicker at the thought.

Saul wished he had been enabled to say, "And no doubt you will;" but not being in that position, it was like him to abstain from holding out any false hope. Yet so inscrutable is life, she was even then travelling with that desire: counting the stations, thankful for each one passed, for it was one stopping-place nearer to him.

"I wish I was on the Rhine again," said Merry, sighing, "with the British public gaping up at me; Dobson fussing about with his men, and my darling preparing a nice little supper in some quiet little room. It has been the happiest period of my life, sir; and if I came to the throne to-morrow, I would quit my royalty at intervals to lecture on my neighbours' States."

The hubbub of Lime Street was below them—traffic deadened by a heavy fall of snow; but the various sounds possessed significant interest, as they do on the last night before setting out on a voyage. Vehicles, hoofs clattering, cries of boys and men, barrel-organs, street vocalists, jingle of cans, barking of dogs, laughter of children, it all seemed strangely soft, heard with a distinctness never noticed before, and not arising only of the snow-laden ground and frosty air.

"I shall think of you, old fellow," said Merry, with touching earnestness, "and always feel obliged to you for coming to see me off; it seems to take away from the dreariness of it."

A brisk wind blew the sleet to the wall opposite, where it lay drifted in ridges that, to the young men by the fire, looked like frozen billows.

They sat without lights, looking down on the brilliant street,

while they told their histories. And when Merry narrated the fortunes and vicissitudes which had chequered his own career, the other listened curiously interested.

They retired to their respective chambers, with a cordial grasp of the hand on the landing, the morrow looming before them, and rather spoiling their thoughts of their next meeting.

And while their morning sleep was refreshing them for the forthcoming day, Jessie had resumed her journey, and was proceeding by slow degrees in their direction. To her, in keen impatience, the train seemed to drag along, the day-break to linger terribly. She felt sleepy, yet would not sleep for watching the dark sky that was so long in taking upon it a lighter hue. As they sped onward, past towns where gas-lamps were still alight in the dead streets—past factories, long lines of illumined windows—past cottages, where the mechanic or labourer dressed by candle-light,—it seemed all night, night, night! But the chilly-looking dawn came on, and patient waiting brought the day. As soon as she could see to do so, she tried to study her time-table book to gather some hope of an earlier arrival in Liverpool than she had been told of; but she could not understand it, and gave up the puzzling attempt.

When at last she drew near to Liverpool, her excitement caused her intense pain,—it was one of those instant seasons when heart and brain are overwrought and physical endurance is at its utmost tension. And she knew there would be trouble, to one in such haste, in finding out the particular docks, the vessel, the best manner of letting Merry know. There was hardly time even for a robust experienced man to do it all, who could push his way through obstacles, and force aside all impeding his progress; and how much less might a weak little mortal like this hope to succeed?

Before Jessie's train steamed in at the terminus the Weirs were off to the dock from which Merry was to sail. "Carry your portmanteau, sir!" from a score of hungry-looking lads. Mr Tattergast good-humouredly shook his head to the first five, civilly declined the offers of the second five, tried to look fierce at the third five, and swore outright at the remainder. The storm cleared the air, and they proceeded unmolested.

Great was the bustle, confusing the din of tongues. The array of vessels, and hurrying to and fro of men, stirred them. Loud bells rang out, and divers shouts rent the muddle hither and thither,—the average lungs of the British skipper hath ponderous weight on the crowded quay. Poor woman here and girl there rushed to gaze their last on some one leaving them; each pale pretty face caused Merry to think painfully of Jessie. Steerage passengers trooped by in frightened bewildered groups. The stolid sailors worked with brawny arms, indifferent to the conflicting emotions around. Last bales and cases were hoisted, reckless of the heads of her Majesty's subjects; late portmanteaux and boxes, trunks and bags, were deposited in their places. Each minute, as departure drew near, the excitement and confusion increased: each minute was one less to look upon friends' faces, upon all the attractions of land. Sobbing and bewailing blended with words of comfort where presence of mind was preserved; crowded gangways, and interminable commotion on deck; creaking of cordage, and the discord of machinery, with the heavy strain on works when departure is instant. And the snow descending on it all, while fore and aft the crew and the passengers looked anxiously at the vane upon the mast-head, a piercing breeze compelling all not inured to it to gather their wraps close about them. The boats were lifted violently as by an after-tossing, and afforded foretaste even before setting sail of rough passage.

The friends in heirship looked at one another, and Saul said, "You cannot think how sorry I feel now, you have decided on this voyage."

"Thanks; I shall be jolly as a sandboy when once we are off. Dobson says I'm to acquire a grand new stock of ideas, so I'm going to observe character."

Light-hearted and sober withal, and making no more trouble of it than was usual with him. Frank-natured, pleasing, manly, and *insouciant*; appearing gracefully at his best during the moments he and Saul stood hand-locked at their leave-taking. Yet under it all was the hard distress on account of Jessie.

"Good-bye, old fellow, and thank you for all. Take care of

my little girl if you find her." Saul could see he was almost overcome.

"Good-bye. May you have a more comfortable voyage than the weather gives promise of. Don't fail to make use of our name if you meet Hugh Edred." The next words were louder, called from quay and deck, and barely heard in the strife of tongues, and the tumult of departure.

"Good-bye. Tell her I will come back to her some day," from the man on board.

"God bless you!" from the man on shore.

Then the waters divided these kinsmen of poor fortunes. Saul Weir stood motionless, watching, so long as the happy handsome face remained in sight. Then he was aroused by a low heart-rending cry, and turned instantly, to discover a beautiful, agonized girl, holding out her hands appealingly towards that vessel receding so gracefully from sight. Her figure stood in relief from all around, and was so pitiful with its terrible disappointment, written legibly on the plaintive, stricken countenance, that Saul felt intense commiseration, and could not observe her without sorrow. With swift feet she had battled her way there, darted over dangerous crossings, struggled along thronged pathways, encountering large bodies of rough dock-labourers; made her delicate voice heard amidst the din, flitting on before informants had time to gaze twice on her pretty face; threaded the bewildering ways she was directed, without pause, hardly, for breathing-time, and after all arrived to see the stately vessel just vanishing from sight. Her life seemed ebbing with it, she could not restrain that piercing cry; men and women looked round suddenly with sympathy, seeing that slender form writhing in dire torture. She could realize nothing save that she had lost him by those few minutes. Everything swam before her eyes; the mass of shipping, the great buildings, the rank and file of multitude surrounding her seemed revolving in a whirl of blinding pain, and she could only extend her hands imploringly towards the disappearing vessel, crying, "Merry! dear Merry! come back to me!"

Saul, who remained standing there, immovable but observant, heard the appeal, and he went close, and in a low grave

voice said, "Merry wished me to tell you he would come back some day."

She looked up in his eyes with great wistful wonder, palpitating, shaken to pieces by conflicting emotions, doubting her own reason in a sudden flash of quivering amazement and pain.

"Come away from here," he said; "you can do no good now. I am his relative, Saul Weir, and have helped him to search for you. I have promised him I will look after you until his return. We shall now serve him best by taking care of your health."

While speaking this, he gently yet firmly led her away; she heard him in astonishment, scarcely able to realize although conscious of the firm will influencing her grief.

A gentleman came up to them (he had been watching Saul's actions: how easy it is to be misjudged in this world!): "Do you know this person, Miss?" he asked, solicitously, indicating Saul, who turned courteously and explained sufficient respecting his interference.

It did good—broke the dreamy, suffering lethargy in which she was plunged. Jessie passively allowed herself to be conducted to a vehicle, and Saul returned to the hotel where he was stopping, and had his charge properly cared for. He did not overburden her with the description of events, but made all plain in a simple, sensible method, which healed while it informed. And then, with the thoughtful regard for the absent always characterising him, made the most of Merry's love for her of whom he was deprived for a time; thus compensating her by the happiest of all tidings for the severe disappointment she had undergone. No living being could have behaved with more considerate delicacy and forethought than did Saul in his care of Jessie; so much so, indeed, even jealous Merry would have been at ease could he have known.

Saul would not consent to Jessie's stirring from the comfortable hotel all that day, and he telegraphed to Daisy that he was detained in Liverpool until the last train. By the evening he believed his charge would be sufficiently restored to go on. Late in the afternoon he begged permission to leave her for a short time, as he had some business to transact.

CHAPTER III

A MAN IN THE PORTAL.

AGNES SEDGWICK hailed the housekeeper's departure with undisguised satisfaction. No amount of deception upon the woman's part would have imposed upon the girl, who actively manifested her repugnance, and saw the place clear of the housekeeper with the most genuine feeling of relief. And there was nothing to detain Mrs Steele in Liverpool when once she was assured the old book had been taken thence. After the purport of the inscription became known to her, through Eli Jebeson, she effected an entrance at the Heron-gate, where, also, she participated in the general *fiasco*. Once free from this troublesome person, Miss Sedgwick took her grandfather to task, and very seriously remonstrated with him: it was a grave deliberation, with Nimrod, the mighty hunter, couchant and observant.

"Now you know, grandpa, we don't really want a housekeeper. I am quite old enough to manage for you, with Hannah, and I shall take pride in doing so, if you will only let me."

A singularly painful look took the place of the vacant and dreamy expression on his face when she commenced, and he murmured rather than spoke aloud his reply. "Certainly; I agree with you; quite old enough. I am very anxious to reduce the expenditure in the household, for trade is now indifferent, and everything dear. By all means let us see what you can do, my child."

The experiment succeeded. Agnes made an excellent housekeeper, and Francis Grattan, one would have thought, had been

content. But trouble was brooding, its shadow had tormented him for a long time past, and it now hovered more closely, causing him much mental anguish, which he had to bear alone. Difficulties encompassed him: slowly and surely they were closing him in, and he saw no escape from the inevitable crash. It made him feel wretchedly depressed, filled him with painful regret, and added many a line to the poor furrowed brow, without curing his propensity for book-buying; indeed, had an execution been in the house he would have contrived to attend the nearest sale and return delighted with some choice purchase: and not till afterwards would repentance set in. The Earl of Chesterfield is responsible for having said that next to the consciousness of doing a good action, that of doing a civil one is the most pleasing. Mr Grattan, as trouble advanced, became very irritable, and a morbid sensitiveness galled him continually. The horrid vision of the time when his treasures would be torn from him was ever present, and a grim poverty haunted his thoughts of the future. Agnes bore with this change bravely, yielding gentleness in return for his sharpness, and tenderness for his abrupt unkind ejaculations. And this conduct appears the more admirable upon her part when we remember that the young lady had some spirit of her own. Nimrod noticed the variable moods of his master, and speculated over it when on the chase, eventually resolving to thieve no more, but nobly to content himself with the product of the hunt. The domestic, who perhaps was the chief sufferer by the master's change of manner, resented it the most, and thought bitter things of him; but her young mistress so amiably represented to her that Mr Grattan was poorly and over-tried, and so earnestly besought her not to take any notice when he spoke sharply (supplementing the petition with various little gifts from a store but too precious to herself), that the discontented one gave in; cried; exclaimed, "Well, Miss Agnes, you be's a good one; it ain't in my heart to be disagreeable while you're so kind; but he do try one, don't he, a'most beyond bearing?" and did really try to subdue all evil speaking, thinking, and doing. "Let the whole world perish so that I gain patience!" was the forcible cry of Tertullian. And many

since have desired that inestimable quality, more particularly in the humbler callings of life.

Now, with every disposition to deal leniently with the old scholar, it must be conceded that Hannah was perfectly right, and that her master *was* decidedly trying. Everywhere, all over his place, was stored reminder of the cause of his ruin, and of the approaching wholesale devastation. Up stairs and down were seen the myriad volumes, shortly to change ownership; walls were lined with them; huge piles tumbled one against another on the floor. A catalogue would have to be made, some inventory be taken, and he had not the heart for it—must suffer the loss, if wronged, rather than the martyrdom of turning out and arranging and going through for any others' benefit. At the mere thought of it he would stand with broken-hearted agony, against their dusky lines, stretching his arms fondly across them, as though to save them from their fate; his poor head leaning against the brain-work he loved so dearly, his throbbing temples resting upon buried thought over which many a brow had ached; and he would talk to them passionately, a very fervour of affection causing his low far-away voice to be tremulous with his pain.

Man cannot live on books alone, nor support life by an intense devotion. Francis Grattan had over-purchased thousands of volumes, and the end was only a question of time; and then nothing would be left to him but an affecting recollection of a great crowd of works once all his own—a fine sorrow that would look back on the stately multitude, as some general, on sleepless nights, looks back over ranks where every face was known and loved, was faithful unto death. True, there would be left a consolation—the essence of the wisdom of those to be scattered would certainly be his for ever; but this comfort in the concrete was slender consolation to one valuing books for themselves.

Humboldt narrates that the mountains of Araya contain caverns haunted by thousands of nocturnal birds. As the trouble settled upon him, and preyed on the fine mind, the old bookseller would dejectedly wander at night in the cavernous recesses where his stock was stored, would gaze dreamily

upon them, moving about softly and with hushed fondness, as if fearful of disturbing them. Wintry winds made disturbance enough outside, chilling him by anticipation, imagining these places despoiled of their company; and at night the shadowy thinkers of all time trooped about him and flitted round. Some seemed to mock the old man as having fallen into the ruin that befell themselves; and there was not one of them but had held gold of less account than learning, and on that score he and they were akin. Francis Grattan had never made gold his idol, nor sufficiently heeded its value to use common discretion. There are some souls about, content to forfeit wealth for wisdom,—granted that their number is less than of old, and diminishing every year; yet there will continue to be greater souls, mightier minds, to whom a large library is the rarest treasure earth has to offer. And this loved library of the admirable scholar was to be dispersed. All the philosophy in one's organism, all the cold want of feeling in one's philosophy, is not sufficient to contemplate the loss threatening him without grievous sorrow. The loss of any possession in which the heart is bound up is sorrowful, especially so is being compelled to part with a rare collection of books, brought together at great cost, not of money only, but of time and pains and experience; for the seeking of these demands wise judgment, while the securing of them very often involves the nicest diplomacy. Many a battle of skill had been fought over the old tomes. In his younger days Grattan was a famed tactician, and his advent at a book-sale was dreaded by opponents. Money never stood in the way, time rarely, and the collector stolidly maintained his resolution to become possessor, whatever the contention. It is well known this policy will founder the most prosperous of argosies. Books accumulated, useless for purposes of sale, of which he felt proud to be the owner, but representing a terrible amount of sunken money, without the shadiest possibility of his ever converting them into a tithe of their original fancy value. Pope's sensitive summary of a character —

“Fine by defect, and delicately weak,”

describes this scholar's nature relatively to his mania, a hobby now ridden to the death, and to be atoned for by innumerable panga.

He was not one to suffer long alone, his pierced heart pleaded for warm condolence. It was a painful ordeal, but he would feel the better for it. He would take his grandchild wholly into his confidence; with all her whims and caprices, her devoted affection had been abundantly tested. It is a touching sight when some old man, overburdened with care, goes pitifully to the young for comfort, maybe for advice—when all the worldly experience, and all the years of wisdom, seem so wretchedly inadequate, and are so gladly bartered for some precious, simple, cheering truth from the lips whereon the dew of youth's morning is not yet brushed away.

Then we see all about the wilfulness and disobedience of childhood. Women-folk, shrugging shoulders prophetically, have prated, with the presumption of narrow-sightedness, over the spoilt and ruined disposition of a child; but stress, sudden calamity, poignant sorrow, or trouble fallen upon the protector, will often develop a delicate devotion for which there is no name in the vocabulary of their elders.

How often has the heart been kept from breaking, the brain soothed when confronted by loss of reason, and the storm-riven soul guided into the haven of abiding peace, by one of these despised comforters, while their clever correctors have been all a-hunt for some bow of ribbon, or higgling with a mercer the while a human soul was being torn asunder!

The world is full of conventional blunders, and hollow falsehoods are received as patent truths. A web of sham overlies the constitution of all things. We want a race to uprise, *cap-a-pie*, bucklered, to run atilt and slay injustice done to the young and weak; to fight the battle of the slighted, be it child, woman, or man; to rescue from perdition those sent to the wall; to unmask the money-grubbers and false professors of religion. We want a stern scourging of the hypocrites, and a routing out of insincerity. Life is spoiled by its artifices, humanity choked by its tares. We want a band of seedsmen to go over the grimy furrows and scatter innocence, simplicity,

and genuineness. We want grand true men and women, nobler souls, to drive out a sordid race; and a brave truth-teller amongst them, who shall put a little child in the midst and say, "For of such is the kingdom of heaven." The old bookseller resolved to put the supposed wilful nature to the test: if true to the character given of her, Agnes would display a want of feeling; if true to his experience of her solicitude, she would prove a comfort and a help.

After the place was closed one evening, Francis Grattan called his granddaughter to him and said, "I am afraid you have thought me a little mean of late, Agnes, in the house-keeping allowance; but I am obliged to be economical, dear. I am sorry to say I am much troubled for the want of money."

She was surprised; such a cause for his irritability had not occurred to her; it immeasurably increased the sympathy his delicate health was all-sufficient to invoke. Without confusion, or discontent, or even asking a question, she just replied, in the most matter-of-fact way possible, "I will practise greater care in the kitchen, grandpa."

"All the care in the world won't save us from having to turn out of the old place, Agnes. Three more winters and I should have been here just forty years. I could have stood it better as a young man; I feel it, at my time of life, terribly."

"Yes," said the girl calmly, while she put an arm round his neck, meaning that he should think he would not lose her; "it seems too cruel to be true."

"Well, dear, it is not too cruel, because I have brought it upon myself. I have been improvident in the business—have purchased lots I had no right even to look at." He confessed it, wrung of his solitary agony, when on the cold and dreary nights he had been face to face with himself as never before, and when his position had glared upon him mercilessly.

"The books will have to be sold?" asked Agnes gravely, with a sad side look at the massive array.

"Yes," repeated he—and his voice had never so echoed

the solemn far-absent depths of his thoughts; "the books will have to be sold."

"How soon, grandpa?"

"The sooner it is done, my child, the sooner my creditors will be satisfied. They should realize enough to discharge all my liabilities," looking along them with intense fondness; but he set rarer value upon them than strangers would.

Agnes stood erect and firm: she was imperceptibly taking upon herself the conduct of this painful business. "I will classify them all, and make proper lists. Tell me of those you specially value—there is no need to part with every one." A glimpse of comfort already with her words. He felt strengthened by having some of the load taken off his shoulders. Her quickness and animation satisfied him she would make little trouble of really doing as she proposed. It nerved him to contemplate the task himself. Perhaps, with her aid, he could attempt it.

Nimrod came up, purred, and gazed steadily in the master's face. "Poor puss," he said, looking mournfully at the high shelves where the cat most loved to scamper. The child stroked its finely-marked head with a coaxing gesture.

"You'll go with us, my beauty, won't you?" said she, endearingly.

The cat purred again, with increased amiability, a decided improvement upon scratching and biting. Misfortune is the antidote to quarrelsomeness.

"It will take a long time to get all ready—weeks, perhaps months;" and Mr Grattan disconsolately viewed the intervening labour. "Meanwhile, Agnes, you will kindly do with as little money as possible."

She cheerfully promised, cheerfully talked him out of his sombre mood, dilated on all they would do when at liberty to live away in some pretty cottage; represented in glowing colours the peaceful change, and how his health would improve; and said other well-meant sensible things, the which he had not permitted himself to consider. If there is a loop-hole through which the sun can shine, let a child alone for finding it.

The purpose arranged by the two was that the work of pre-

paration should commence with the new year. "And a sad new year it will be," thought Francis Grattan.

Christmas came at last. If ever sorrow is brooding, it seems to oppress more heavily at such seasons. The snow lay deep. Out of doors it was one of the good old-fashioned Christmases that are things of the past. The cold nipped them up, and their hearts did not keep them warm. There was less custom than ever, and therefore the more time to ruminate. Mr Grattan ruminated, and came out of it miserably woe-begone, while his Agnes busied herself warming him toast and ale. She was determined he should not give way so, and set herself to alter it.

The snow gave promise of remaining to see the old year out.

Grattan shuddered to think it his last Christmas in the familiar rooms. There had been many an ending of the years, but never one like this.

It was the day after Christmas. Nobody had been in, even to gossip. It was drawing near the time for lighting the gas—Agnes called it "Blind Man's Holiday." Her grandfather sat by his little stove, situated at the back of the shop, and purposely removed as far as possible from the entrance—because Grattan's, like many another similar establishment, never closed its doors during business. The doorway, indeed, was lined with books inviting to close inspection by merely stepping from the pathway.

Thus sitting, thinking as usual, the old bookseller considered with ironical truth he was not giving up possession any too soon, if this was to be the order of trading. He was feeling irritably discontented. Bad trade and the weather, bills and his illness, all conspired to try him. In the house he could hear Agnes singing blithely as a bird—that tried him. There were no singing-birds about in December, especially in the last days of it. There was a peep-hole between the books stacked up against the glass of the right-hand window, through it he saw the gleam of brilliance where a gin-palace had lighted up early in anticipation of doing a tremendous business—that irritated him: people were all for guzzling while their

minds might perish—and that tried him severely. Few people were about, except those of a rollicking sort, jovial souls going to spend their Boxing-night merrily—and that galled him awfully. The idea of a roystering crew carousing over their brainless revelry, while himself, ruined giant in letters, knew not where to turn for a single cheerful thought! People stamped along muscularly, glowingly, healthily, while he sat there shivering by that plaything he called his stove—their barbarous vigour set his teeth chattering. It was too dusky, if not too cold, to read, and of late he had rather turned against it; there was difficulty now in settling to it with the old devotion. He hardly cared to pay those stamping idlers outside the compliment of lighting up his shop. The shadows within deepened, the walls appeared tapestried with gloomy figuring; either side of the entrance were dark recesses; through the doorway was the dazzling snow. Taking this in from under his pent brows, he saw a man in the portal, who had stepped quietly off the pathway to look up the shop for its owner. Not discovering him, owing to the duskiness within, he did not advance, because his coat was snow-sprinkled; and he feared its falling and damaging the books, strewn broadcast; so he contented himself with looking along those in the lobby, and waiting until the proprietor should put in an appearance. Old Francis Grattan did not trouble to move: it was one of the stampers, probably, taking shelter, or wanting to shake his coat over the stock—and this also tried him aggravatingly. But he could not help noticing something manly and prepossessing about his visitor, and nothing of the thoughtless disregard he had conceived. The man seemed waiting, with a natural dignity and patient respect, and Mr Grattan thought well to go nearer. Then he recalled the profile. “The carpenter,” he said to himself, and advanced to meet him.

“Ah, Mr Grattan! how do you do? As I was close by I could not resist looking in to see if you were better.”

“No, Mr Weir, I am worse,” replied the scholar; so dismally, the young man exclaimed—

“Good gracious, friend! what’s the matter? Nothing serious, I hope?”

"Depends upon the light we look at it in! Not from the critic's point of view; but to me, very." The half-morose, half-despairing tone pained Saul Weir. It would be no slight matter to cause a man like Francis Grattan to give up so utterly.

"Well, I should like to hear a little of this, if I can do so without prying into another person's business—a disgusting failing, from which I pray always to be delivered."

"You're not in the fashion then."

Saul thought the bitter sardonic change which had come over the old scholar the reverse of ingratiating, but he believed there was some sad cause for it.

"The observance of decency is nothing out of the common, I hope."

"Then your hope, like most other people's, is a delusion. But come in. How is it you are in this part of the world again?"

"I have been seeing a friend off—for New York."

"And buying everything—except books, I suppose?" said the old man, with captious petulance.

"I think so," answered Weir, pleasantly; "he's a book in himself."

"With ragged binding, then, I'll be sworn. The usual fate of the human books."

"He has gone to be rebound, and possibly may come back with gilt edges," replied the carpenter, carefully removing the plain warm overcoat, from which the snow had now disappeared.

"He'll be turned out calf with it then, I know;" said Grattan, sitting by the stove again, and indicating a chair for his visitor. Like every other vantage-point, it was loaded. Saul made room for himself, lifting the volumes with a regard that won upon the testy owner in spite of his discontent.

"How goes on the learning?" he continued.

"With more advantage to itself these long evenings."

"Any books you are wanting to help you with the studies?"

The young student looked at the old one piercingly, then cast a slightly envious glance around. "You are tantalizing me. You know of many that would be of use."

"Yes ; I will make you up a parcel." Said slowly, and with such evident reality, Saul could not suppose him to be trifling, nor could he suppose him to be giving, so he answered it thus :

"Nothing would please me more, but I am not prepared just now."

"It is a gift, boy—a gift ! Perhaps the last I shall ever make. Don't forget to think of me when profiting by my old friends."

It honestly took Saul Weir by surprise. He was much affected. "This is good. I thank you, Mr Grattan, with all the sincerity I naturally should feel upon receiving such a gift. I value books almost as highly as you do yourself."

"My stock is to be disposed of," said the bookseller, with a trembling voice. "We cannot compete with shilling novels, less twopence discount."

The mocking bitterness of this caused Saul much pain. "I am distressed to hear it, sir ; I feel for you."

"Feel for my books, Saul Weir, not for me !" Passionately, yet with the soft utterance of the deepest emotion.

"Tell me all about it," said Saul, with the soothing tender manner natural to him when his heart was touched.

"There is little to tell, and that you may guess ; love at the beginning, and loss at the end,—no uncommon programme in this world."

"Yet, I'll be bound Providence leaves something to console you. I never knew an instance of sorrow but there was some comfort left to encourage one."

"By the time you are my age you'll know of a many. Youth would take a sanguine view of a paralytic sitting astride an earthquake."

"I hope there is no cause to go so far afield as to search for a paralytic astride an earthquake when thinking of the providence of God." And, a degree mortified, Mr Weir cast a surprised glance around ; it seemed so strange to him that wisdom did not always bring patience in lieu of petulance.

As though in answer to his belief, Agnes Sedgwick entered the shop, but was about to retire upon finding her grandfather engaged. He bade her come forward, laid a hand fondly on her shoulder, and, with softened earnestness, remarked : "This

is my comfort, sir; and I wouldn't be without her, no, not for all the——" he paused; he had been going to say "libraries in the universe," but he knew the assertion to be untrue, and felt it would not be believed.

His visitor finished the sentence for him: "Boys in creation!"

"I should think not," said Miss Sedgwick, coolly, piqued at being put in comparison with such an inferior race.

Mr Weir looked up at the vivacious speaker. Accustomed to so different an order of girlhood, this dark-browed beautiful spitfire appeared freshly, and, as he thought, unpleasantly original. The girl never showed her truer nature to strangers, the majority of whom went away with the impression that she was spiteful and irretrievably vicious, which it has been the purpose of this chapter to refute.

"She is a good girl, sir," said the old man, apologetically; "serviceable in the house, and helpful to me in many ways."

"You shouldn't praise me before my face, grandpa; it's wrong,—makes one vain." And with a demurely reproving look, she patted him in playful correction.

Mr Weir smiled kindly upon her. In return she tossed her head thanklessly, and grimaced her disregard of his kindness. "Wants breaking in," thought Mr Practical to himself; and that was as near as he could get in an estimate of her vexing character. Perhaps she fathomed it; her fine flashing eyes speared and arrowed him without mercy, and with combative excitement: or perhaps she resented the smile, new to her, and, if it was anything like the smiles bestowed upon Daisy, of exceeding loveliness. Agnes was not one to be attracted by any such charm of manner; and as for being caressed, she would rather have cleared a ring in the midst of the books and fought the manly carpenter with intrepid ardour until he or she gave in. Whatever the cause, she looked animose, and walked with a proud air to the door for a glimpse at the weather. Her grace of movement, combined with symmetry and beauty of a dusky type, resembled the attractiveness of some lovely Italian.

"A regular little vixen when she likes," whispered the old man, "but as good as gold, sir."

Mr Weir thought he very likely saw with blinded eyes: molten gold was good, doubtless, but he preferred it when engraved.

Mr Grattan stirred himself and looked out the books, a large parcel of them, while Saul watched this generosity with a grateful feeling never likely to diminish. He was deeply interested and moved by the trouble that had befallen the old student. He could imagine the heartbreaking trial it threatened to be, and felt no surprise that it had rendered him a degree fretful and captious. Saul shook him warmly by the hand at leaving, and with so simply frank a manner, indicating his gratitude and sympathy: Agnes looked up kindly in the carpenter's face; and when her eyes thus looked, how different they were, and how hauntingly to be remembered! "I certainly misjudged that girl," said Mr Weir to himself, apologetically on her behalf. He liked to be straight with everybody, more especially with any one who had speared and arrowed him with flashing eyes and without mercy. He strode onward thoughtfully, the trouble besetting the household vividly in his mind.

Upon returning to his gentle charge, he found her looking so much better it pleased him exceedingly, and he said: "We may now be going, I think; I am anxious to introduce you to your new home, where we will endeavour to make you very happy until Merry's return."

Jessie thanked him with tears in her eyes for this kind speech; but she had already, in her long quiet thinking, devoted herself to a different course. She described to him Madame de Gonsalvo's promised protection if she ever stood in need of it, and while thanking him very sweetly, said that she had already decided on going to her.

"Return with me to town at least for a time, and I will myself take you to the lady."

CHAPTER IV.

NOCTURNE: IN GREYS.

ONE of the social problems of general interest is, whether one thinks most of the world's opinion or of one's own importance. And it is really astonishing of how great importance each one is in his own individual estimation; of course, always excepting the people who would not on any account think anything of themselves, and who are even as grains of mustard-seed fallen amongst palm-trees and cacti.

Life is prodigal with suggestive illustrations. We pass a country churchyard: old women are gathering the nettles upon uncared-for graves to allay their pains a little longer, and because there is no soul to care for them; and they fall to quarrelling as to who is the superior maker of the tea to come of it. Now, undoubtedly there are better and "worse" makers of nettle-tea, and of course, in a community of village ancients, it is important the superiority should be settled without delay; but dispute over those quiet mounds does strike one as incongruous. But then, life is a series of incongruities.

Here our wanderer has fallen to the wrong Weir. The inheritance is afloat, certainly encased in wood, but with no more than a few planks to avert its floating for ever. There are stormy seas on the Atlantic at this time of the year. It is an eccentric, half-wild old woman in charge, greedily watched by a foe of unusual cunning, of whose existence on the boat she is not even aware. If there are Weir bets or bonds about, some of the holders will be glad to dispose of them.

To add further to the vexing inconsistency of circumstances, Jessie decides to go at once to the lady who experiences so warm an interest in her; thus in his absence crossing Merry's views most determinedly. For several reasons he would never have consented to her going there. But of this strong objection Jessie was wholly unaware, and thought indeed he would much prefer it to her remaining at Mr Weir's. One does not know how to behave for the best with such a susceptible jealous individual.

We live so utterly for the present minute, strong with the consciousness of the supreme importance of our immediate individuality, insensible to the time beyond and behind, untroubled by any other human contact touching us at right angles, yet ever ready with a note of censure on other people's narrow-mindedness, and a louder note—trumpet-note, in fact,—on our own large-heartedness. But it certainly does seem an unkind sport of destiny that, after the girl had fallen into the hands of the wrong Weir,—kind hands, notwithstanding, and honest ones,—he should be the one to conduct her to the very place that other shunned so vigorously. Nevertheless he had been going to make a special journey to Meadowford, with the hope of gaining an interview with Madame de Gonsalvo, independently of this later object. He had deciphered the Spanish documents discovered by him, and the connection between the name thereon and the name upon the bracelet led him to wish for a meeting with the lady.

We have now to turn for a season to other events, in which Rupert Redland was interested, marking yet more distinctly the importance of coincidences, and further showing us the inherent goodness of that young man's heart.

It came about in this way.

Walking along Sloane Street, when passing an artist's shop, he saw a lady in evident trouble. She had but just left the shop, and was in tears. Some rudeness or some disappointment might have been the cause, and Redland passed with a glance of compassion. As he walked on, something in that face revived remembrance of the portrait of Mrs Potter, with which he had been so interested. The impression grew strong

upon him, and he turned back. Overtaking the lady, he felt sure, as he passed her, notwithstanding all the changes of time and trouble, that the original of the picture was before him. Conquering his embarrassment, he ventured to accost her.

"Pray, pardon me—am I addressing Mrs Potter?"

"Yes!" looking up with surprise, and shrinking. It might be some one who had known her in better days. Conscious of presumption, he hesitated, and they looked at one another. She discerned at once that he was of kind and feeling heart,—the unfortunate are so quick at detecting sympathy.

"I once dined with Mr Peter Paul Potter. I saw a portrait of yourself there that interested me. I have not forgotten it."

She turned pale at the reminiscence, while the old well-remembered room where it was hanging upon the wall, caused the street to grow dim before her tearful eyes. It was a chilly December evening, and he was thoughtful enough to know that waiting about was not good for one thinly clad and looking very delicate, so he, with marked kindness and respect, asked permission to walk a few steps. It was readily granted. There was, in spite of all, the wife's hunger to hear something of her old home.

"I feared you were in trouble," he said. "As I passed, I noticed your distress."

"I hoped to have disposed of some drawings; they have taken them of us before. My daughter is clever with her pencil, and has bestowed time and pains upon them. We *are* to be disappointed."

"Possibly I may help you. This meeting is providential."

It was like him to think so, with his touching, simple faith, his kind heart, his almost empty pocket. What an echo of far-off happy years was there! He thought none the worse of her for that slight symptom of impatience. Those who come down to poverty are not like those who are reared up to it. Misfortune runs the refined in one of three grooves—religion, philosophy, or cynicism; but the impatience crops up about equally in each. There are times when the human asserts pre-eminence, however spiritually-minded and resigned the sufferer

may be. This is natural; it is not wicked, nor is it retrogression. Some are sad with this thought, it seems so like going back, with all their care and watchfulness. The depression is unavoidable, all the same, for being unnecessary. The thing is natural: it will pass, and peace will reassume its calm sovereignty. One glance at the gentle features beside him, with that same resigned yet dignified expression which had so won upon him in the picture, told of a being whose suffering was keen, yet whose hope had never died. The features were terribly lined and careworn, and even by that light he saw the hair was grey, while in the picture it was of rich dark brown; but the sweet dignity was present through it all, and the breeding no poverty had succeeded in warping.

He told her his name. It was not known to her, but she instinctively felt she could trust him, and respectful mention of that picture was sufficient introduction. He pressed her to communicate the sadnesses and sorrows weighing her life down, telling her of his own condition in the social scale, yet offering sympathy; and as even sympathy is better than nothing, and especially invites to confidence, she acquainted him with the record of their struggles from the time of giving up the school—the usual tragic narrative of shifts and alternatives, with an awful refrain of privation underlying all. How one daughter went out to daily teaching, another taking fancy-work upon barbarous terms, then the dainty art portfolioed under her arm brought in a little, the fourth daughter giving music-lessons at pupils' own residences; and out of the whole of it there was little enough wherewith to keep five people, but of late much of this had been uncertain, being winter time, which made it worse for them. It was told with frank pathos, and such sorrow as only the lady-mother, so placed, could feel. Its humility, that was always dignified and resigned, impressed the young man. He felt glad they had met and told her so, requesting permission to see her further upon her way. There was something graceful and son-like about this very grateful to her, and she accepted his kind protection. Could the book of London friendships be compiled, a wealth of superb unselfishness would therein be read, and men would learn it is

not alone the young and beautiful to whom chivalry lends an arm.

They turned from Lower Sloane Street into Pimlico Road, Westmoreland Street, and narrower ways nearer the water. Upon one hand extended Millbank, on the other Grosvenor Canal, while between stretched dreary carriage-sheds belonging to the Railway Company. Close by was Turpentine Lane and Effingham Street, housing a humble colony, and the lady hesitatingly explained that she came at first by water, hoping to find a moderate yet respectable set of rooms thereabout.

"We applied at the cleanest-looking of the places, and succeeded better than we anticipated."

The other unfortunate shivered at the recollection of the dirty, comfortless, condition of his own poor lair.

Mrs Potter entered at a strange-looking dwelling, utterly unlike the recognized house of England. Pieces of old boats having joined in its outward repair, it presented a motley, romantic exterior, quite in contrast with the surrounding ones. The owner, a thrifty lighterman, a lover of nature, had planted ivy and various other evergreens upon the ledges and projections wherever it was possible for such to grow; lichens and moss crept along little edges of the wood,—even grass had found a safe retreat. He kept pigeons, and had built them a house on the top of his own. They fluttered tamely down upon the roadway, and were much admired by the neighbours, who, indeed, looked upon the whole concern with pride and satisfaction; and it is not too much to say that, had Westminster Abbey and the honest lighterman's both been on fire at the same time, these neighbours of his would, without a doubt, have tried to extinguish the flames at the lighterman's first. They were proud of their cottage, and looked up to its sober hard-working owner with much respect. Go down to the river any sunny day, he was there, in red cap and blouse, busy with his large flat-bottomed lighter unloading ships of their bales, and singing with no bad voice roundelays of the country. Ever ready to do another a good turn, to the loss of many an honest penny

for himself, yet thriving with it, and without a sorrow in the world. The man of the Thames loves it—the noble expanse is his universe, its constant variety the long book unrolled before him from which he gains his knowledge of life: and there is much to be learned on the Thames to one constantly observing its shifting phases. These watermen are a different order of being to the warehousemen on the banks—more gifted with quaint reasoning, less addicted to tavern arguing, merry withal, and sensible. Not so devoted to their flowing beauty in the fogs and mists of November and December, but making up for that lapse of affection when soft breezes blow across its healthful surface in the spring, and when broad summer sunshine brightens the sails and rigging gloriously. This lighter-man kept his lighter as scrupulously clean as he kept his house, where his pride was not of the outside only. It exerted its influence on the neighbourhood; other householders aspired to the same interior order. Before he was married he said to the wife to be, “Now, I’ve a nice little home, as you know; can you keep it so, or do you like the other order of things?” After a pointed question of that sort there cannot well be any mistake. That same niceness was quite after the lady’s own heart, and she felt competent to preserve it, reward falling upon her with the union to its honest owner. To this humble good-natured pair, and this cleanly country-like dwelling, had come Mrs Potter and daughters, and these unfortunates might have fallen upon worse quarters.

Four young ladies, dressed in neat dark clothing, were sitting in the room to which their mother conducted the visitor. Two were at needlework, one was drawing; the eldest, with an expression of melancholy, was reading Young’s ‘Night Thoughts,’ and looked up with large sad eyes, as though half believing the pale slight stranger entering with so soft a foot-step could be no other than the Rev. Edward Young himself. The other girls also looked up, surprised and curious; the two at needlework rose, dropping scissors, and causing Miss Potter to start nervously. The lady drawing did not stir, every minute was too precious; but her eyes, questioning the success of her mother’s errand, caught sight of the parcel brought

back. She blushed slightly, and then stooped lower to her work. Mrs Potter briefly introduced her daughters, and explained to them the kindness of this new friend; whereat Rupert, with delightful ease, remarked, "I am afraid, young ladies, your mamma extols the interest I have shown. I was guilty of forwardness in addressing her as I did, but being, indirectly, a friend, I ventured, and met with the free pardon I should have expected. My note of introduction is a feeling heart, and plainness of circumstance, making us akin; and humble fellowship goes far, I believe, towards relieving even poverty of its sorrow. I am pleased to make your friendship; my influence is almost as slight as my means, but by God's help I may be of some service, and if I can do no good, my motives are sincere." It removed their embarrassment; they could see he was happily at home; that he really enjoyed the domestic atmosphere associated with, and only with, the presence of females; and they grew unreserved and pleasant, while always preserving their lady-like deportment. There was absolute pleasure, notwithstanding all the sadness of the rencounter.

Upon the mantelpiece was a pencil-drawing of a girl's head, done by the artist present, and its rare beauty attracted him. He stood before it admiringly, and asked, "A fancy sketch, Miss Potter?"

"No," answered the painter gently, without stopping at her work; "a little pupil, our favourite, when we kept a school at the seaside. It is drawn from memory, and scarcely does her justice. We have not seen or heard anything of her since."

The young man looked more closely at it; he saw writing, small, fine, and trailing unassumingly with the filling-in lines at foot, and he read the simple words, *Dear Daisy*.

He supposed it her name, and did not much care for it, but the affection indicated on the artist's part he thought very pretty, and that alone was a thing to be remembered; but he found himself repeating the name to his own inner self to see if he liked it better, while the face imprinted itself upon his memory.

"And now, Mrs Potter, I am going to be very practical. Will you tell me how I can serve you? I will call anywhere you please, and see proprietors or managers. I shall be happy

to write letters for you,—they sometimes carry more weight when in masculine hand. May I look the papers down for you? I see them daily at a Club. I have no doubt I can obtain copying for your young ladies, if they would care to undertake it. And I was reading only to-day an advertisement for superior makers of wax-flowers. I am quite sure I can seek out the occupation most congenial; this is always an awkward thing for ladies to do."

He was just the sort of person to call upon them. His words revived hope, and his visit did them a world of good. It was one of those rare visits that *are* made when times are darkest, and which seem so like direct messages in reply to impassioned prayer. Some time after he had gone, passing by the mantelpiece, Mrs Potter happening to look at the pencil-drawing, saw at the foot half a sovereign. She knew it was his delicate way of giving. It might have come from dear Daisy herself,—it was purposely made to convey the idea. Her heart was full, her eyes tearful; she went into the adjoining chamber to be alone. So often had she sorrowed that God had not given her a son to fight her battles and defend her, comfort, advise, and work for her, that now this kind and tender friend seemed raised to fill these offices; and the thought thrilled and shook her mightily.

Their landlady entered the sitting-room with a fine fowl dressed for cooking.

"The gentleman who came in with your mother, Miss Potter, has just been back, and asked me to take this upstairs, with his best respects."

The message and the thoughtful gift awaited the mother upon her return to the front room.

Rupert meantime was struggling with the labyrinth of dark lanes and streets, amongst which he was for some time unable to find his way. Some tired wanderers, a degree poorer, and wearied with toiling along white roads and bare bleak tracts beyond the suburbs, asked him for alms. He gave them the allowance he had intended for his supper, and with gruff thankfulness they slouched past him. The young man drew himself up, with a sad wounded smile. The world

seemed to be peopled only by the unhappy, and he felt his power so slight. He walked along a silent street, across a silent square, and over a shadowy bridge spanning a dark canal. A barge was silently plied by some unseen power on the shadowy bank; a fire therein sent forth its supernatural glare; the bargeman sat smoking; a dog slept beside the fire. Rupert watched it glide from sight, then left the murky channel. Past a coal-yard, animate with gloomy shadows, skirting a colony of miserable cottages,—the out-cast and the homeless leering vindictively at him, they could not see the shiny elbows by that light, only that he was a gentleman. A few quiet stars looked down upon him, but never saw an unkind glance in return. A great goods-shed reared upon the right, yawning openings at intervals, drays and waggons phalanxed, black corners, made more so by the glamour of dim lights seen fantastically in the distance. He passed an open space, apparently a shoot for ashes, bones, and old glass bottles; then a rood or two of grass; a grimy corner, where an unsteady lamp shook in the wind until its flame was nearly shaken out of it; and round the corner a dull road, excavated, a barrier, a slung red lantern, and a tremendous jet of gas flaring high into the air and flushing the dull houses rosily; a long and hideous shaft, with ledges and platforms, grey and indistinct, far down, to a depth unfathomable in the starlight; rumbling noises, and the souging of imprisoned winds, whisperings, and the dripping of water sounding like tears. He could not determine whether these works were in the interests of water, gas, or sewage, but he did think the scene a weird one, and shivered slightly at the thought of how effectually he had contrived to lose his way. It was slimy under foot, and reeking with noisome exhalations. He floundered along a part slushy as a mud-bank. It brought him to the water-side, slipping and sliding at the river-edge on the ooze and driftings of the recent tide, cold and horrible by the uncertain light. Close by loomed shadowy arches of a bridge; around and about him were drawn up craft, spectral and silent; ahead reared warehouses on the wharfage, with lights here and there that left streaks on the muddy water;

vessels at anchor, with dull red fires, and one or two forms standing motionless as ghostly sentinels; on shore, silent darksome ways, narrow courts and passages, and alleys between the great lines of storage; yards, and grey stone blocks of gigantic building; dim drear arches, and gibbet-like hoists that swayed with unearthly creaking in the fitful gusts that blew from over the Thames; a close vault-like scent of hops and sacking, cordage, tar, oils, and sugar. Drays, trucks, and carcase-cases, tubs, and barrels; straw, black and saturated, upon which the footsteps fell noiselessly; little quivering faces, pinched and woe-begone, peering from the crevices of the joists and windows and doorways right up the warehouses,—it was a weird course altogether.

He came upon a *posse* of river police returning from their water-side parole. They grasped his arm, and demanded his business at that hour, and he very soon informed them, and asked the best way out of it. They directed him, and told him the tide was rising, and if he didn't look out he'd be overtaken; that it was nothing uncommon, and sometimes on summer nights, when young vagrants slept down there, one of them had been caught and drowned. Then they marched on, in regular time, with heavy tread, their burly figures casting shadows giant-like as the shadows they cast before the eyes and on the lives of those same young vagrants.

He heard the gurgle and lap of the water against the piles and stakes of a landing-stage, and came upon some rude ladder-steps leading to the mud and stones, lying back on the green wet wood that faced the bank. Iron rings and chains, old anchors and ropes, bodies of dead things, amidst which he stepped gingerly, moist weed, and the refuse of the last tide. Moored barges, black, bulky as fortresses of the nether world, awaiting the rising of the tide. He stole around these craft, half sleepy voices asking who was there, or muttering in a *patois* unknown to him. He discovered a batch of the desperadoes who live on the findings in the ancient stream, and he crouched behind the huge keel of one of the vessels. He saw them lean to the water, with long hooks, the instruments whereby they gather in their awful harvest; and close in to

shore, were strangely shaped boats, of small build and sluggish speed, upon errands of the pirate-morgue. The trail of lights upon the opposite bank only made the scene more gloomy. Further on, in a cranny of some crumbling masonry, he found three little street Arabs sleeping, locked close for warmth; and remembering the officers' warning, he turned them over ruthlessly. The eldest, swearing angrily at the intruder, curled again, and slept on the instant; the others glared with ferret-eyes, and besought him for bread. Rats that had scampered away at the commotion were not more outcast. He walked on, the soft moan of the eddies monotonous and wearying. A wailing cry pierced him and turned him cold. Some distance off a frantic being smote the rising waters in the face, wrung from them their secret, and chased his pain between the piles. Rupert shuddered and fell back, staggering against the moist stone of a landing-stage. The grey scene grew misty and dim. Then objects took changed form. Yon block of stone became a grey-white wall with a tiny window draped with honey-suckle; yon forest of masts and rigging came forth as a sheaf of rose-trees; calm windows of that stalwart merchantman were hazy with the bloom of lavender, the figurehead as the porch wreathed all over by the sweet clematis; behind, there was white and dim flushing of apple-blossom; at the window there seemed to be a face, small, and so delicately shaded, it could be no more than a drawing in pencil.

Weird phantasmagoria, transformed for an instant to a picturesque summer-dream.

It soon came back again in its cold and unhappiness. He walked more rapidly, entered a ship-yard when he ought to have been a quarter of a mile the other side of it, and found himself in one of the dock-hospitals for the poor old worn-out monsters of the deep. They loomed against the sky with a despoiled scaffolding of skeleton rigging. We know his susceptibility to weird influence, the momentary apprehension of the unnatural. The impression caused by the scene thus encountered was a peculiarly solemn one. Those fancied shadows might be grisly forms trooping on to the ruined battlements of deck, that phantasm of creeping things the

ghosts of those heard no more of. White faces seemed to be above there, haunting eyes looking for land. He moved cautiously amongst the silent buildings in this city of the dead; and yet not silent: the water made low moaning, like hushed voices mourning for some one gently lowered over a ship's side, or a mother bewailing her silken-tressed child; a packet of letters with dead flowers and half a ring of gold was thrown to the deep with the love never to rise to warm a life; those old black clothes the widow dared not keep were dropped by her own withered hand. The night seemed eloquent with sad and tragic fancy crowded from out association of the ships. And he thought that the planks of old decks should be sacred long after the battered hulks pass to the final rest in the yard; for that many an inch was thrice hallowed by tears which had fallen thereon. He looked timorously upon either hand, the ghastly glimmer of decay, the livid streaks of phosphorescence, making the hulks more hideous; and the seeming throng of spirits—that freighting of ghosts who made busy the street of ships—glided from out the sullen corners and stole about him on every side. He stood amidst the drear deserted shipping; shafts of moonlight broken on the timber; one lamp far away that made the recesses of the gloom more dense; the dull sob and throb of the water rattling some iron chain with gibbet music; the rats, undisturbed by his approach, chased across the forsaken hunting-grounds; lumber of the docks formed fantastic devices; overhanging, frowning warehouses, with dungeon-like grated windows, and hoists that groaned while the wind blew shrill about chain and cordage. These surroundings suddenly all ceased to engage his attention, and he became transfixed in watching the stealthy movement of a woman, who, gliding from one to another of those dismasted vessels, seemed to be scanning the name of each as though bent on some agonized search. Had it been any ordinary prowler of the night, the spell woven of the scene would have been broken; but this was some poor lady of most sad countenance, and of such cautious conduct it bespoke deadly fear. Such unutterable despair, such complete abandonment of all hope such silent sublimity of sorrow, he

had never seen on any human face. It came upon him as he stood beside the ship where, under shadow of its bulk, he was motionless, and feeling guilty of even that innocent *espionage*. Eyes too mournful for tears, a face so stricken as to be statuesque, and actions which, by their gentle solemnity of reverence, convinced him she walked as mourners walk in the cathedral of their lost. She disappeared for an interval, and he was moving from his post of observation when he again saw her, and he determined to accost the troubled woman. He was moved by that extremity of anguish. A word has oftentimes broken the spell of great trouble. He softly, respectfully spoke to her. A vacant gaze from eyes that yet flashed with great pain while she placed a thin cold hand on his, and whispered with horrible significance, "Make no alarm—I am mad. Do not harm me. I am so quiet in the house, and quiet in the city, that none suspect; and at night I come here. I have no joy but this; and I try hard to act as others do who are—*well*, lest I am prevented coming. I cannot tell you how we loved. If you have ever loved, spare me."

Spare her? He gave her his arm with the deference he would have displayed had majesty been there, assisted her with the delicacy his own mother or wife would have received, conducted her with the tender care he would have bestowed upon some dear invalid, and left her at her dwelling with the courteous bow of a gentleman who recognizes in grief a superior presence.

He found his way to a wide thoroughfare, the lights and vehicles dispelling the feeling of sadness caused by his adventure. It had been a strange evening altogether, one that would never be forgotten. Acquaintance made with that poor lady, towards whom he felt attracted from first looking upon her portrait: love at first sight, with the pencil-drawing of one small delicate face: night romance of the Thames, concluding with that sad encounter. Yes; he thought it a singular train of incidents, and walked on to his own poor lodgings, thoughtful, wondering what all this weird show, this grey spectacle called life, would end in for him.

CHAPTER V.

THE MEETING IN HIGHGATE CEMETERY.

A PLAIN neat stone, in Highgate Cemetery, bearing a word, ARCHIE, over which was sculptured a dove flying upwards.

It was away at a quiet part, where the ground was cheap—a resting-place within the means of poor people.

Not of sufficient importance to bespeak classification—irregular, young and old, good and bad, but alike in past poverty.

He had rested with the outcast before, and it harmed him not.

Near to this was a short mound, eloquent as such are: brief pathos, sharp as some tiny cry when a darling wrestles with ineffable pain.

There was only ivy upon it, but this had begun to creep towards his grave, as though it would cover and encircle it; and the mourning child who often knelt there softly guided the tendrils to do so. It conveyed an idea of comforting him, loving him, clasping him deathlessly. She kept the delicate thought to herself. It was one of those that, if told, cease to be sacredly beautiful.

Once a poor woman went and laid choice flowers there, bought of her scant earnings. It was his landlady, thin and ill-looking, seen in the clear light of a winter afternoon. This spot was the holiest spot on earth to her; it drew her very near to Heaven. She could not pray at home amidst the noise and worry, but here her whole soul was moved, when no one was by but the silent dead. He had taught her the grand experience, the fine, pure passion—late love; when all the world seemed so tiring from long knowledge of it, when she seemed to feel so old,—that wearied regret for lost youth experienced

by poor, toil-worn, uncomforted women,—when she felt to be going down life's jerky and steep incline without a hand to take her own helpfully. Then he broke upon her history, miserably poor, weakly, a tax on her kindness; but she would have given all to have put arms about his neck, just once, while she told him of that motherly love.

And there came to his grave that other elderly woman, loving him past the telling by words. The old mothers reading these lines will know the love without being told—the awful and sublime passion of aged maternity, and the horrible, the unutterably horrible void, when standing by the plain neat stone. *That thing* in the place of the throbbing exquisite life that lived for her with every heart-beat!—That cold shapely slab, hideously severe, for the warm hero-beauty, without its peer for grace or equal for sonly tenderness! No wonder poor humanity rebels sometimes, until — comes memory of the suffering here, and “It is well,” we murmur.

Saul and the little girl accompanied her there, but went apart during that sad reunion. Well did Saul fulfil his promise: was finely compassionate and regardful, sought by many rare sympathetic expressions of his pity and affection to console, if but a degree. It did no good, but the effort was kind, and none could have done more. It was not to be expected this sturdy splendid fellow would console for the loss of one worn pale and thin and sunken-eyed for need of very necessities. This health and vitality of itself wounded her, and when alone there, she moaned, thinking that none had helped before it was too late. Late help is such a ghastly mockery always, in the remembrance of the mother mourning afterwards. The cruel verdict by the world that there was not room for one delicate sensitive lad, willing to expend his soul's best in adding to the beautiful art that refines the whole earth. The careless usage he and his poems received, the privation he underwent, the mortal sickness, the languor of the shadow which is more than the death itself—she could not bear to think of it all, could only kneel with lips on his grave, kissing it; the poor old hands, whereon the veins were so distinct, clasping it: but she arose before they came



back, and presented a calm front, dimly heartbroken but calm, and accompanied them, silently, out from the city of the dead into that where there is noise, much noise; how it rends the heart-strings sometimes!

One other visited the grave, unknown to these, and with different emotions to any of them; for she was young and beautiful, and if one was lost of whom she had thought much, those were left of whom she had thought more. But although she had seen so little of him, the young poet was not one ever to be forgotten by Etta Lute; or any one else, for that matter. Their house was not a mile from this garden of the *immortelle*, and she would sometimes walk there, standing prettily sad before that simple name, recalling a face unlike any seen before or since, hearing again his poems as they sank to remain in her heart for ever.

Surely the lost had no lack of mourners then. True spirits with whom regret was no compliment, nor pastime of the display of comely wearing apparel; but hearts saddened by this young loss, tender with pain, sweetly treasuring his memory. And there was yet one other. Genuine Rupert Redland sorrowed for his friend. He went to the grave one day and found there a child: she was planting daisies, and was so intently engaged she scarcely looked up at the young man standing by watching her. He thought her very beautiful while thus occupied. A cold wind blew her hair about, and lent a deep red glow to her cheeks; he noticed long lashes fringing eloquent eyes, and remarked that the features were faultlessly moulded, and noticing her thus, it dawned upon him that he had seen that dainty face before, and if memory served him, in that pencil-drawing at Mrs Potter's. Rupert had received a letter from his friend descriptive of the little nurse who had been so good to him, as well as of Saul Weir; thus he was in no way surprised to see her there, but felt a little startled to find it was the child whose beauty had so prepossessed him in the drawing.

"You are lovingly engaged, little girl."

She looked up surprised and sorry at the intrusion. She tried to smile, but as tears were in her eyes, the attempt was

a poor one; the blending lent such moving pathos to her face, the sensitive Rupert thought it the sweetest expression he had ever seen. It was one to woo from all restraint or diffidence, even that elegant timidity a true gentleman experiences when thus alone with some refined and beautiful little girl.

"Archie was my friend also," he said. "You may have heard him speak of me."

Some sudden consciousness of the truth caused her to look intently at him. He would not leave her a moment in suspense.

"My name is Redland."

"Rupert Redland?" she inquired, with a quivering lip.

"Rupert Redland," answered he, much pleased.

"Yes, you *were* spoken of," she said, with deep tenderness; and then proceeded with her gentle office, compliant with those last requests.

"I wish you were my sister, child." It was spoken in a low tone, but with such passionate yearning, it indicated more than it expressed. She could guess the loneliness behind, and with a simply affectionate action gave him her hand.

"God bless you, little one!—A pretty gift. I should like to keep it."

Large snowflakes began to fall, and soon the grave was covered with a delicate tracery of white; some lodged on the fresh black paint where his name was cut—its letters were softened as by a pure smile; some alighted upon her hair and subdued its colour—upon her glowing cheeks, and toned down their dazzling hue most modestly. Childlike, she loved the snow, and lifted her eyes, looking upward into the clear unfathomable sky: that look and its light were long imprinted on the young man's heart.

When the artless ceremony was complete, and the last root planted, she went to the head, and kneeling, kissed the name upon the stone. He admired this simple devotion, and thought her every attitude reverent and becoming.

And the snow might have been sighs of content, the flakes fell so gently, and covered the hillock after they had gone as though to preserve her work from stranger eyes. Poor singer! a tender welcome ministry at last.



“‘ Archie was my friend also,’ he said. ‘ You may have heard him speak of me.’”—PAGE 80.

CHAPTER VI.

A DRAMA OF THE ATLANTIC.

THE Stormy Petrel was sailing gallantly upon her course when suddenly the sky grew lowering, the heavens were overcast, and the sailors—who are at about the same point of enlightenment as in Jonah's day—began to look round for the cause. The superstitious ones put it down to the evil old woman for ever sitting on that wooden case, which they felt sure enveloped some contents of ill-omen.

Holding herself aloof from crew and passengers alike, Noeba Edred planted her pedestal and sat upon it, immovable as the mast. For any one to act so suspiciously on board a ship, whatever might be done on land, creates disaffection.

Beyond showing her teeth and looking dangerous she was inoffensive enough; but her appearance was so mysterious, and there was such an exhibition of the aggressive, that strong prejudice existed; and when the canopy above darkened threateningly, those superstitious ones glanced askant, and with ominous jerks of the head warned each other where to look for the source of the probable storm. The brown-bosomed sailors gave her a wide berth, and shrank when her fierce eyes flashed up at them; while her laughter—mad, defiant, or in pain—rang amidships.

To a reflective mind that solitary figure—reserved, suffering, disdainful,—glancing wistfully out to sea, caused an impress of sadness rather than of aversion; but even a reflective mind failed to fathom the character, with its intensity of hidden feeling, its curbed passion, and its mightiness of affection for that distant, silent son.

Her persecutions were not light on board the ship, but so insensible did she appear, that the men had it she was a witch, and charms against evil spells, philtres, sworn antidotes to devilry, and preservatives from tempest, were in large circulation. Few on deck amongst the service but detected an inkling of diablery in connection with that motionless, grim, female figure, always looking out to sea, as though counting the waves ahead to land; as stolidly unyielding to taunt and jeer as would be the hard old figure-head of their ship.

She would often sit there also at night; the darker, gloomier, and more terrible, the better she liked it; no light in the heaven, or on the waters, save her eyes flashing with portentous fire; and the boatswain, who was of the superstitious ones, swore the rigging was thick with devilets and devilkins!

The great expanse of heaving spectral ridges; the endless moan; the shrill flight of winds; the ghastly underplay of shadows, only seen on dark nights when indistinct glimmering marks the progress of the ship; the southing and wailing of furious gusts; the great grim billows that rose, and, as though rebuked by her hideousness, fell back seething into the night; the sullen masses of cloud piled up in a grand despondency; hail falling like jet, with a black gleam, cutting her while she grinned savagely, spreading out her gown to protect the case made by the hand she fancied she saw vivid and kind, and felt gentle and soft, in relief against all the ebon solitude. Very pathetic was Noeba Edred's remembrance of her friend, whose noble countenance shone in her memory upon the voyage, and lighted all the dark ways by which she was striving to reach her son. Gruff retaliation and incivility to those who believed she had brought ill-luck with her into the ship, were not more real than was the touching, pitiful clinging to memory of Saul and her son.

She had no brave defender nor protector now, and she knew it, and clenched her hands till the nails cut into the palms with the energy of her determination to guard her treasure. Amongst all the passengers, and a crew numbering thirty men, there was not a soul who approached her or said a kind word between the bells.

Perhaps it was no wonder, for if they did she looked ready to eat them; and men and women agreed there was no doing anything with her. Little children even fled aghast, and the woman saw it, shivering; for she had borne a child. Her war was not with the children; she often hungered for the least of such smiles as they scattered broadcast.

And those lowering clouds seemed to gather above the woman's head. The crew saw her grim welcome of them, heard the saturnine chuckle as she crooned with elbows on knees, and they wished her on board any craft but the Petrel.

Suddenly a riven spear of lightning was hurled from the clouds: the mate, who was standing by the knight-heads, declared it fell flashing at her feet. She folded her bony arms, and laughed aloud.

The passengers hurriedly questioned the men respecting the hovering gloom, hoping it was some effect of not unusual and not perilous occurrence. They could only say it might pass over. Their looks were grave. They talked one to another in serious undertones as they obeyed the captain's orders—an action that is always fraught with meaning on the ocean. Some of the gentlemen calmly sought the captain, and in a practical way inquired if there were grounds for fear. The captain in such a dilemma is placed very like the courteous physician, who, for his honour's sake, dare not (and so he did not) withhold the truth.

They knew then; left their smoking and card-playing, and with presence of mind prepared the ladies on board. There was no panic, simply a choking feeling at the throat, and a painful fluttering at the heart. Those who had little ones gathered them close with a pressure that hurt and caused them to wonder.

Order prevailed from stern to forecastle. The fine nautical discipline never appears to such advantage as when hazard is imminent.

In the forepart of the ship the steerage passengers, herded together with sad terror, were very quiet. They could do so little in it, they could but drown, they said, as they had said on land so often they could but die.

Of the steerage and saloon passengers, the former presented the most resigned front. People with money, of course, think they should be exempt from shipwreck as well as other fatalities, which their inferiors live and thrive on.

The looming, metallic effect, reflected from the bank of clouds, made the seas lurid, bronzed the whole seething mass, and laid steel ridges that heaved and swept forward as though clearing the deep of all that was floating on its surface. This, said the philosophic and indifferent, was one of the phenomenal aspects so profoundly interesting to view; and they brought out camp-stools to view it, until lurching of the vessel sent them on their backs, which they held to be phenomenally violent, and retired to their cabins in high dudgeon.

With admirable coolness the captain gave his orders in clear emphatic tones, in anticipation of the gale which he believed would be quickly upon them. The tremendous billows heaved with a force that appalled, and the wise man of winds and waves knew better than most of his crew the terrible struggle impending. He was very kindly-spoken, although firm as iron, and thought with intense dejection of all those poor souls on board.

Entries were made in his log-book, and we know how brief, how awful with brevity such usually are. Confidential commissions were given to those immediately under him whom he could trust in case of disaster; and the delivery of such life-and-death instructions is the most solemn duty ever falling to human lips.

A dense haze enveloped the ship. Then, ahead, loomed a seeming barrier; through this the vessel ploughed, to be sailing afterwards with a black sea-fog that lent phantom effect. Melancholy, not of despair but of resignation, possessed the men, and their efforts lagged for want of will. Unaffected by blue fog or black, the fantastic guardian of the wooden case sat at her post, shrouded from the view of all, closed in, girt about, as though the spirit of fogs and mists.

They sailed three leagues with their slender spars piercing that canopy of fog, the planks wet with its moisture, canvas dripping as with a fall of rain.

The decks were cleared of passengers, all save that hardy woman, and she let the waves break at will. The captain went to her hurriedly, and advised her to go below. "Nay," said she, "I bear a charmed life!" And it confirmed the general opinion to that effect. Wet through and chilled, no more fearing the catastrophe than she had feared the voyage, and muttering, "Not until I find my son!"

And more scowling than the heavens, more ominous than the shadow of the storm, was the stealthy, disguised Mormon, who watched events with hideous satisfaction.

The hard wind at last began to blow off the mists hitherto so troublesome: in time it increased to a furious blast, and there was no looking to windward. The ship lost her bowsprit in a heavy sea; its crash shook the vessel as though she were going to pieces. This was the first misfortune on the list of troubles, and the boom floated free as if glad to part company with a barque hovered over by devastation.

Athwart the deck rushed the waters, deluging the entire space with heavy floods. The galley was borne away, and timbers were torn from the deck. Noeba Edred raised a hand imperiously, white and supernatural it looked, and two men went to her fearful and shuddering. "Lash that to the mast!" she commanded, pointing to the case; and they did so. She wound one end of the rope securing her treasure round her arm, and with her back to the mast bore the brunt of the storm with still fiercer defiance. She stood firm, enjoying a haughtiness of isolation none dared or cared to interfere with.

The captain strode from spot to spot, holding on by cordage or whatever would help him along; it was no season for stationary injunctions. He helped his colleagues to nail canvas over the breaches, bale out the cabins, and endeavour to repair the fatal damage to the wheel. He was calm, yet full of agonized earnestness, with a mournfully exquisite remembrance of a flower-like little daughter sleeping happily in her cot at home, and of a loving wife, often on her knees praying for those in peril on the sea.

With cool discipline he gave the order to equip and lower the long-boat, and those directed held themselves in readiness

to descend. They attempted to lower her, but the ship heaved a furious sea that stove in the boat and destroyed this chance of escape. Further attempt was made with the quarter-boat, and more successfully: but peril made men selfish; the weak were pulled from their frail hold, and there was a violent struggle for dear life. Prayers to Heaven for mercy arose amidst appalled shrieking of the women. The captain vehemently bade those in charge to put off; and the unhappy ones, huddled close, wailing for parents or children left upon the ship, were seen to sink in the heavy surge immediately. The captain, after this awful fatality, would not risk the starboard quarter-boat. The minute-gun was fired, and the solemn discharge heightened the horror of the time. Every minute saw some grievous ruin or accident tending to their affliction. The lightning revealed a weird and terrible scene of wreckage and havoc. Human countenances were distorted with fear and withering care; a stupor of anguish or exhaustion caused others to stare with dazed insensibility; some had gone mad, and laughed gleefully with gruesome enjoyment of the excitement. Bitter lamentations rent the conflicting tumult. Many, upon their knees, prayed with fervour and resignation. Noble women, who had refused to leave the ship while their children remained, stood with one hand clasping that of their boy's, the other holding hard some dove-like girl that had swooned in shocked pain. Men, who had hesitated between the ghastly choice of remaining with their children or going with their wives, saw that the same fate would overwhelm them, and that in death they would not be divided. The cry of "Breakers" arose, and then their fate was sealed. The statuesque Noeba Edred never released her care of the treasure: she stood ready for the shock, face to face with death and eternity—smiling at both with sad scorn, wearing intolerable defiance even at the moment of the ship's striking upon the rocks.

In that moment of imminent risk, the Mormon saw her struggling in the water; unable to release herself or the case from the rope. With a hatchet he cut her free, the same action liberating the case. She could but catch a glimpse, in

that instant peril, of the man who had rendered the service—a shaggy-looking fellow, black as the night, with tangled hair, and a great beard lying matted with the wet. She saw men and women taking to one of the boats: there might be chance of escape; but no, she would remain. She had seen enough of the havoc wrought amongst the boats, and determined to chance the spars or rocks or whereby else there might be opportunity for saving herself and her treasure. Fighting the blinding and cutting spray with one arm, while she held madly on to the case with the other, supported by the fallen mast and network of rope and cordage, furious as the storm itself at the thought of being parted after all from her case. She attempted to raise herself up, tried to get more on the rock, which sloped down, jagged and uneven, far out under water. By the vivid flashes of lightning mournful spectacles came to view—many a ghastly upturned face and floating form—fragments of the wreck, tossing like idle playthings amidst the spars and planks; and with a fierce grip on the supporting wood, she made a surer position, while the strained muscles of her body seemed cracking and dislocated. Not, if tenacity could avert it, should her body join that unhappy concourse. The tremendous stubbornness served her in good stead: she seemed scarcely human in this combat with the elements. Such poor souls as were still clinging to the wreck saw that fierce struggle, and it aroused them to greater endurance on their own behalf.

Equally as enduring in his avaricious obstinacy, the Mormon looked after his own safety. One false movement on the woman's part, the release of her treasure for but an interval, and, could he get near, it would change hands. His position was full of peril and difficulty; but he never abandoned his scheme, and waited until she was dashed upon the rocks or struck by some floating timber. When the seas broke over them with less violence, he scowled and swore at the prospect of the storm abating. Yet with the mysterious moods peculiar to the ocean, it did seem that its fury was nearly spent. Those in such terrible risk could feel the change instantly, and the woman thought with pain

of the chance lost of escaping from the reef. For even if she could scale the ridge of rock, it was unlikely any vessel would approach near enough to the dangerous part to discover her situation and put out to her release. Great depression seized on her with the thought, when, and it seemed providential, by a flash of lightning, which lay upon the scene like a flame, she saw a small boat drifting near. A relic of the wreck, it offered at least the bare and lonely opportunity of floating forth—where to, God alone knew! She paused when it came to her hand before committing herself to that horror of uncertainty, for the reef with all its barren desolation was a resting-place for the sole of the foot. But the thought that the frail boat in its drifting might cross the track of some vessel, influenced her, and she lifted the case into it, holding on to the boat inflexibly, contending as best she could with the efforts of the waves to drag it from her clutch. And when she thought of her son, to whom it might perchance bear her, the clutch was like that of a wild beast.

The Mormon saw the action, and with proportionate astonishment; he quickly, however, decided upon a course for himself. He entertained keener opinion still of the old woman's courage and foresight when she caught at a tin of biscuits washed on the ledge of rock, and such other floating provision as she could lay a hand upon.

Gradually the tempest abated. She delayed putting off in her boat purposely that she might have less to encounter; the hazard would be all-sufficient without the hurricane. When she thought it could be safely done she clambered into the boat, having first baled out the water with a seaman's hat she had picked up; next, having secured the case to an iron ring and placed her provisions in the small locker, she let go the friendly mast and rigging, and faced the dark beyond. Instantly there followed a plunge, the measured sweep of hands, and the panting of the bloodhound. The boat's side was grasped and it lurched,—a cunning, gloating face rose up from the abyss, she heard the guttural laugh she remembered all too well, and before she could recover the shock of her surprise, the Mormon, having thrown off his false beard, dis-

guised no longer, and fiendishly gratified, hoisted himself into the frail craft, and was floating forth with her.

As she saw him by each gleam of lightning, sitting opposite and glowering wolf-like at her, she felt mighty with strength notwithstanding all she had gone through; face to face with this implacable foe, who seemed hunting her to the death, and a death-struggle she believed it would end in. The thunder pealed above this grotesque, weird pair at war. Death in many shapes stared them in the face, but the deadliness of their feud remained unaltered. Amidst it all rode the two, eyeing each other warily, and prepared. When Lufkin swam after the boat he had two kegs in tow, partly filled with fresh water, and some provisions he had also picked up. Thus they were independent of one another, except in this important respect—Mrs Edred had no water, and she trembled while her mouth grew more parched with the thought of it: he had the manifest advantage, he could drink, drink, drink, while she might perish of thirst.

The Mormon dragged the small sail and mast from beneath the seats, and with characteristic silence rigged them up. Then the boat was borne on, and safely as would have been possible had two angels been sitting therein. With the lull there came sinking of wind and more equable motion of waters. The black clouds parted, with a glimpse of the night-sky between, and the Morning Star appeared. The calm was delicious to that fatigued woman; her head nodded drowsily, but at every movement of the fox-like antagonist her eyes opened: she was awake and alert, and she would have wrestled with him with alacrity.

The remaining clouds and cloudlets gave way to a deep amethystine expanse without a shadow. It was reflected back by the clear sea, outspread the immeasurable breadth of it, crowned by Alcyone the bright star in the constellation Pleiades. Those fitting couriers of the Dawn, the sea-birds, sped on fleet wing with the errand of the morning. A pale grey, scarcely light yet putting the darkness back as it approached, now spanned the horizon. Winds lapsed to breezes, and they were gentle, as though sighing at the havoc

wrought by their wild relations. Fragrant bloom, not of the morning only, but that odorous pungency noted after a tempest at sea, was lying thick, as on any great garden back in old England. Water became almost pellucid, mirroring the advance of daybreak. Then increase of the light, flooding of the loveliest hue ever seen in nature, resembling the white splendour of silver, and under it that cadaverous, colourless woman, came out spiritualized; she might have been some lonely watcher in marble on the threshold of a vault where treasure lay.

The pure tint upon the firmament and sea became tinged with a faint yellow, and the waves might have been strewn with pale primroses, so were their curves garlanded with blown foam like a lace of delicate petals. Effects do not last long upon the ocean: the whole softly changed to an exquisite pink, the blush painters cannot depict nor any man describe. It was the advance of Dawn, the first flush of sunrise, and soon the vast proscenium seemed draped with colour. Long streaks and glowing lines were lying out upon the East, low to the water's edge, as though the chariot of Phcebus was slowly rising from the deep. A light gorgeousness of shade prevailed, colours mingling as with timidity, and without union of the brilliant factions, until they were lost in the great blaze of the sun.

Upon the expanse of heaving gold the azure descended and blended beautifully, and while the sun mounted the empyreal steeps the contest of colour was merged in the peace of light. From dawn to day a succession of pictures, and these hanging upon eternity, were seen as at no other time. Slight was the influence of this sublimity upon those in the boat. The man sat tapping a keg, from which he drank sparingly, looking at the woman the while, lynx-like, with one eye. And she felt a pang, thinking of the probable suffering in store, while she scanned the horizon for a sail. Knowing the ocean to be immense, the passing to and fro of vessels was also beyond calculation. One *might* pick her up she believed, and her indomitable spirit showed no symptom of diminishing, although she suspected that the Mormon counted upon thirst

performing its awful work for him. The horrible significance of that thought caused a feverishness. She looked at the green sweep of waves with a long, hard look, hoping by so doing to concentrate her will to a cool, tranquil endurance, that should be removed as far as possible from all heat and excitement. Her arm, wounded and strained, was ready if he dared to attack her. She sat with her piercing eyes searching the horizon for some speck that might hold forth hope. There were over-leaping billows, and wavelets that frisked in their rear, the shaken masses of spray and long white surf-lines, but no sign of any vessel approaching to her relief. A white-breasted albatross flew over them and seemed about to alight. Jediah maliciously pointed to his companion, exclaiming, "That's the old woman, Commodore; peck her eyes out!" Thus indicated, she glared upon the Mormon and his bird too, and felt a match for the pair of them. It flew onward with great flapping of its wings and a harsh discordant cry.

The level heave of the water caused a giddiness to overcome the enduring woman, a species of vertigo, and all her art was needed to conceal the feeling from her companion. She withstood gazing out upon the shifting main, and looked deep down its crystalline fathoms; it was coldly fresh and restored her in some slight degree. All seemed so peaceful, it almost caused her to long to be with those who had found their rest in the mighty depths.

Jediah Lufkin did not see it in this light at all. He was absorbed by thoughts of the continual mastery of the stronger over the weak; the seizures, ruses, combats, surprises of the unwary, and wary too for that matter, making the bed of the sea the greatest strategy ground in the world. He fancied some wily and artful fish pouncing upon another, and descending with it swiftly to the pebbly bottom, and he would look maliciously across to his antagonist, whose teeth were set at him, while her grizzled head was as undauntedly erect as ever. He revolved busy plans, having her surprise for their end. She was aware of it—dimly, fearfully sensible of the inevitable combat; and silently, stealthily she nerved herself to it, while apparently looking down into the translucent world be-

low. Tantalized and suffering, she could look no longer on it. Her hands worked convulsively, the fingers gripping like talons. It was a movement natural to her, but this desperate clutching at salt air indicated pain—rending, lacerating pain; and the Mormon discovered it, and chuckled over it horribly. There was water to slake her thirst aboard the boat, but he would see she had none of it. He stuck like a barnacle to his kegs, lest the motion of the boat sent either rolling towards her.

Across the diamond-sparkling breadth there broke the first intrusion on the monotonous view—a low shelving rock, an uneven ridge of dusky crags, and the man said to himself, “Now’s the time!” He meant possessing himself of the case, and swimming with it to that lonely island set in mid-ocean. Noeba Edred saw that grim break in the level expanse, and looked calmly out on the purple shadows lying across the waves: they might ere long be tinged with blood. There was a bright noontide sky, an indescribable glow upon the water; she gathered in her breath, prepared. “I bear a charmed life!” she muttered, laughing to herself in sardonic contempt. It was drawing near to an awful moment—to the fight, midst of the desolate waste: but she seemed of iron, girt in hard armour. A rapacious bird flew by on enormous wing—its great cruel bill outstretched like a weapon, its keen and greedy eye on the boat below, where it saw the grim act of a tragedy in slow rehearsal. Fleecy cloudlets, midway in air, looked too young and peaceful to be hovering above such war. Floated the boat on, not towards the rocks, but sufficiently in their direction for the miscreant’s purpose; and he rose up suddenly, and stooping under the sail attacked her with ruffianly violence. Struck, bleeding, deathly pale, showing her teeth with combative disdain, she closed with him—sinuous, tenaciously, to the death. And the boat dipped to the water’s edge, threatening to capsize, in the thick of the fray. They were conscious of the necessity for caution on this account, and the struggle was the more grim for its smothered violence. “You fight for your treasure, old hag!” he bawled. “No! I fight for my son!” was her passionate reply; while her eyes flashed, and her hands twisted round his arms. With a fierce

oath he flew at her throat ; and she writhed under that murderous clutch. Veins were swollen—the blood rushed to her head—she gasped suffocatingly. “Ay,” said he vindictively, as though reading out her doom, “strangled at sea !”

“It will be coming back, then !” she yelled, and swooping suddenly, yet all carefully, on to her knees, she brought him to a lower bend, when she dexterously seized his ankles, and with a swift movement jerked him backwards. Then with the spite of a wild-cat she returned his mode of attack—caught at his throat, and stuck to it. He had fallen lengthways in the boat, struck in the back by the loose sail. He had no chance of recovering the advantage, with her fingers fastening upon him like iron hooks. The more he struggled the closer she gripped. Mercy was as foreign to her as was fear ; but she paused an instant to put the passionate question, “Where is my son ?” and she released her hold to give him power to reply.

“At the Silver Mines, Nevada ; at White Pine !” he muttered with difficulty, his strained eyes denoting how nearly he had been strangled. She verily believed she had wrung the truth from him. It was the beginning and ending of all having interest for her. He had told her of her son, and he might have the wretched thing he called his life for it. Rising suddenly, with her knee beneath his body, she, with a strong contempt, jerked him out of the boat. She had seen him swim, and he might swim, but he should never enter there again. And she saw him sink like lead ; while she turned wearily, white and trembling, clasping the case with her shaking hands, murmuring “Saved !” She stretched forth her hands in the direction she believed America to be, and cried across the long, long lines, a wailing, yet triumphant cry : “I am coming, Hugh ! Dear son, cheated of my letters—boy whom my bosom pilloved—darling, lost for so long, I am coming !” She fell back across the wet planks, arms astray, the poor devoted hands, skinny and wasted, lying inert. And thus floated on the broad Atlantic, she and her treasure, preserved thus far.

When Lufkin rose to the surface he attempted to reach the boat ; but the ocean proved stronger, and lifted it further with every heave. It became more and more remote, until a speck

lost amidst the growth upon the water. Aware that he stood a chance of losing his precious life if he made further effort, he struck out for the rocks—approving his own foresight at having waited until near to them before making the onslaught.

He reached them, to find jagged and perilous crags, and beyond, a cliff-like wall with heavy ledges seaming its face, whereunder the sea-mews held undisturbed possession. The steep, precipitous incline, presented formidable difficulties; but Jediah Lufkin was one of those rounded personages who smooth every difficulty, and surmount every obstacle,—even the dangerous bars piercing Atlantic waves. He rose with the breakers, went sprawling over the boulders, climbed the crags, scaled the steep cliff, and sat down—monarch. A puffing and blowing monarch, rubbing a head of hair erect as a hearth-broom despite the wet.

There was little vegetation, little life, little of anything save excrements of sea-birds; but there was an uninterrupted view, and he was a great stickler for situation when there was anything to watch. In this case two objects—a ship, to take him off; and the clever wood-work of Saul Weir the carpenter. It would come floating into his dock, he believed, if he gave it time: and since it was not convenient to pursue his journey, this he must do. He accepted the situation. He was accustomed to a great salt lake, and a devoted admirer of a star-spangled banner.

And he would have it all to himself—he liked a thing all to himself; meant to keep that Treasure all to himself, when he got it, unless he bought up New York, and converted it into one commodious hotel for the rest of creation. Several small projects occupied his busy brain in the matter of the Treasure; and this point-blank banishment in no degree lessened their design.

How to exist became the immediate problem, but being of ingenious and inventive calibre it did not discompose him very long. He held to a theory that a man might starve in a desert but need not do so in the Atlantic, rich as a restaurant in creature comforts; and as this is a peculiarly valuable theory for a man so placed, we wish him joy of it.



“A puffing and blowing monarch, rubbing a head of hair erect as a hearth-broom despite the wet.”—PAGE 94.

Afternoon passed, and sunset; evening stole onward, cold and misty; night fell, and a clear, white moonlight lay out upon the waters, where there was but one dark patch on the serenity—a black boat, an outstretched form, while a woman's face was wrought painfully in the anguish of a fever.

Meteors smote the heavens with a swift descent of starry rain. Lurid gleams of green-gold phosphorus shone across the sea; waves were luminous, the wreck seemed afloat in fire, or illumined blood, or what not distempered fancy conjures of the phosphorescence of the infusoriæ.

The plastic agony, so wan and weird, was lighted by the pale glow, and it was a spectacle to win tears from angels. Worn motherhood, abroad with a grand devotion, conqueror of murder, lying low with terrible fever. The thirsty waste, the ebbing and flowing fire, the sickening rocking—perchance for evermore. Bewildering courses of the stars, when her pangs parted the heavy eyelids. Cold, cold hands, straying without the power to draw themselves upward for curling on the splashed bosom; and her curious freightage, motionless as some ghastly tyranny.

Surely no sadder fate was ever witnessed by the supreme guardians of the night, no solitary tragedy between submarine and aerial worlds was ever more piteous!

Furrows on her cheeks and the wrinkled brow were all distorted: it was no longer the chart of venerable years; a convulsive mask of poignant pain covered the features, until even all their want of comeliness was hidden.

A strange moan left her lips: "Hugh—to the Watergate—it is there—safe—safe—for you!" It died away on the ocean, and her lips closed tightly as with the fear of being overheard, while an expression of beautiful devotion fell upon the face until banished by the intensity of her agony.

A tired sea-bird fluttered above her, its wings fanned her burning brow; it alighted, and its plumage was damp with the coolness of the clouds. In its beak it bore fruit, culled from some far-distant island, and it left the delicious morsel upon her breast when it winged its way onward.

CHAPTER VII.

MERRY IN PURSUIT..

THE Gay Gallant, was a magnificent screw-steamer bound for New York, having on board a notable individual in the person of a Mr Merry Tattergast, and one hundred and nineteen passengers besides.

This sprightly argosy left her dock with colours flying, and presented a handsome, debonair outline, while navigating the Mersey, that attracted the notice of all who saw her. A quantity of people lining the dock-walls watched the stately progress of the ship, and no doubt wished her *bon voyage*. One of the Liverpool and Philadelphia steamships passed her, coming in, and a double shout arose from men safe havened and those just setting out. The Mersey bore the freightage as though with pride and glee; even the sun shone upon the descending snow-flakes, and those on board took the omen for a bright one. The perspective of Liverpool, with its crowd of shipping, and beautiful scenery on the Cheshire side, kept Mr Tattergast on deck. They sailed Rock Channel neatly; the friendly Light tolled its sonorous bells, as is the custom. The Great Burbo Bank stretched its gloomy four miles, and they gave it wide berth; Crosby Lighthouse rose darkly through the snow; Taylor's Bank, the West Middle Shoal, and the Jordan Flats were successively passed. Regulated by the black and red buoys, navigation of the dangerous channels without the port is at the present day a matter of comparative safety.

Later another beacon—the Formby Lightship—moored in Crosby Channel, likewise tolled forth its warning; a red

Full, a red ball at the foremast-head, a red light showing through the snow. They passed Queen's Channel, the Bell Beacon at its entrance; by the North-West Lightship, its black hull with a white riband, and a black ball at the foremast-head; her huge gong beat them out into open waters where, on the left, the mountains of Wales frayed the horizon. Thence to the Irish Sea was clear sailing, and the novelty of looking about him had not worn off when Mr Tattergast learned that they were skirting the Bay of Biscay, and the great Atlantic was before them. Our voyager now proceeded to scrape acquaintance with such of his fellow-passengers as were well enough and in good spirits enough to make friends, and to settle himself comfortably for the enjoyment of his sojourn aboard ship. Full often did the young man think with emotion of his fondly-loved Jessie, and of the good friend to whom he trusted fortune would yet more closely unite him. He would write to him the first opportunity, and Saul, he knew, would be glad to hear of his safe progress. The people on board were not particularly talkative; indeed, Mr Tattergast thought them a queer lot altogether. He considered that if anybody had reason to mope and look blue it was himself, for he didn't think a fellow could go through a worse fate (and survive it) than the loss of his sweetheart.

He sat in the saloon observing them awhile, applying mental designation to each after a learned and scientific fashion, which he held to be an improvement upon the tinker-tailor, soldier-sailor method of classification. Thus, one old gentleman, with a terribly morose expression, he set down as a monomaniac; and another near by, who might have been his brother in misery, as a hypochondriac; and a sly and crafty-looking being, whose eyes were all over the ship, as a kleptomaniac; and a person of profound thought poring over an ancient volume, as a bibliomaniac,—and so on. Another interesting group it pleased him to tick off with brevity were, first, a person evidently suffering, a dyspeptic; next, a superfine being, highly glazed, styled a hypercritic; and a fierce, defiant man, with argument on the brow and a challenge on the lip, to all intents a sceptic; and a marvellously great creature,

whom he believed a critic ! And since in the mood for thus reckoning people up, he believed the gist of others to be thus expressed : to the right a hyperbolist, it was defined by his observations ; to the left a physiognomist, that, too, was certain ; just before him was a pneumatologist, a very learned fellow ; and next neighbour to him was a scandalist—the being's tongue would run on nineteen-to-the-dozen about everybody on board. Well, there were likewise a phytologist, also too learned for Mr Tattergast ; and a monumentalist, who was large on all the features of historic interest passed upon their way. Again, the idiosyncrat and the iconoclast came in for tabular noting ; but a far more entertaining assembly, to Merry's idea, were the idiot, the fool, the booby, and the ass, with the original British gormandizer for chairman. Having thus arranged the company, after a manner that might have astonished them, he proceeded to address himself to them promiscuously.

"You are bent upon enjoying our trip, sir?" to a sickly-looking person, suffering horribly.

"No, sir, I am not. I wish to goodness I was safe at home!" and he groaned again.

"I understand ; there is too great pungency in these saline particles."

"Oh, confound the saline particles ! Go and talk to somebody analytical." Here they were interrupted by one of the long-heads, upon whom "particles" and "analytical" acted galvanically. He rose with enthusiasm as though about to deliver a lecture, but the motion of the vessel tumbled him against the spherical waistcoat of a corpulent person, who pushed off the analytical without ceremony. The learned and scientific gentleman thus repulsed was not to be diverted from his desire to inform the audience of his deep reading in philosophy ; and, holding on by the table, bobbing his head with energy, and addressing himself especially to the impressionable Tattergast, he thus enlightened him : "The composition of sea-water, sir, is as follows : water, 962.0 ; sea-salt, or chloride of sodium, 27.1 ; chloride of magnesium, 5.4 ; chloride of potassium, 0.4 ; bromide of magnesia, 0.1 ;

sulphate of magnesia, 1.2; sulphate of lime, 0.8; carbonate of lime, 0.1; and proportions, varying, of sulphuretted hydrogen gas, and hydrochlorate of ammonia: forming in combination a powerful"—pausing for a word, Mr Tattergast, with gravity, supplied "emetic!" whereupon the sickly-looking person groaned audibly, and left the cabin. The departure of this gentleman did not diminish the scientific professor's ardour; and with emphasis, while not a muscle of his dry hard face was relaxed, he again addressed Mr Tattergast, who was himself not altogether unacquainted with delivery in public. "Gases in, and of, the sea are as important as its salts. Air enters the sea in a large body, and the oxygen is increased: this it is which preserves life to the creatures of the ocean, gives colour and beauty to the weed, flowers, plants, mosses, lichens, and the surprising exuberance of verdure to the plantations and forests there existing,—as witness, for instance, the *Varec porte-poire*, which grows more than a thousand feet in height."

"So that," said Mr Tattergast, with becoming solemnity, "a person overboard alighting upon the branches of that—I forget what you called it, sir—would be literally up a tree!" The serious person looked at the utterer of this remark narrowly, but, as he also was looking serious, with confidence reassured, he favoured him and the company with a little bit more. Just the sort of man to have on board: he knew all about it. Mr Tattergast made a note of his last in the interests of Dobson's, thinking this voyage might put him on a par with that unprincipled guide, his predecessor, of whom he had heard so much.

"Marine vegetation, sir," the professor continued, "depends more upon the air than does that upon land, being rootless and soilless; but gas is not only absorbed, it is thrown off, it rises and dwells like a bloom upon the surface until the wind scatters it, and the atmosphere thus charged with saline-oxygen possesses those properties of ozone, the most healing influences known to men."

"Yes," approved Mr Tattergast, "I quite believe in ozone, very much so!"

"You will pardon me, but I do not quite think, 'believe in,' a relevant term; the composition is no myth, it is the important component of life. Simplified, ozone has been proved by great authorities to be three parts of oxygen compressed into the space of two,—oxygen through which electric discharges have taken place,—and air in which moist phosphorus has been undergoing oxidation. I suppose you would not quarrel with such men as Andrews, Tait, Soret, Odling, Brodie, Grove, and Brewster, over this little matter?"

"I? Oh, certainly not! As a matter of fact, I make it a system never to quarrel with anybody."

"Ah, there you do wrong, sir; in the moral atmosphere a quarrel acts as beneficially as a thunderstorm in the natural world reorganizes corruption and purifies the air."

"I don't care for benefits gained in any dark and disturbing method; I am a disciple of sweetness and light, sir."

The long-faced gentleman looked at the careless rover before him, and solemnly said, "Are you?"

"Yes," replied Merry; "and in the most deferential manner, having regard to your profound acquaintance with natural philosophy, I beg to ask you, without circumlocutory rounding of the question, what is the normal heat of sea-hedgehogs?"

Gentlemen of the saloon looked earnestly at one another upon hearing this extraordinary inquiry, and then at the speaker: it was just possible, although not very probable, that he was making game of them; the extreme attention, however, displayed by him while the professor was discoursing, removed the suspicion of nonsense. "And I further wish to know," continued Mr Tattergast, "whether that interesting marine edible, supposing we were on short rations, would yield that essential article of home consumption, Gammon?"

The scientific gentleman looked positively shocked. "You have evidently not seen the beautiful and instructive little creature you designate by a term coarsely in use among the vulgar."

"Well, I really have not. I, of course, imagined a sea-

hedgehog was—a sea-hedgehog ;” and, with an air of contrition and virtuous desire for information, Mr Tattergast again looked becomingly attentive, as also did the meeting generally ; the enlightener upon water—which he naturally deemed the most interesting subject to discourse on—adding to his lecture in these well-selected terms : “In rainy weather, sea-air contains less ozone in consequence of diminution of oxygen. Negative oils add to the aromatic qualities, but are held in control by the saline force. Those eminent marine experimentalists—Mr Tenant and Dr Marcet—obtained seawaters from every part of the globe for the object of testing and comparing the relative properties, and they found the Mediterranean contained a larger proportion of health-imparting qualities than the oceans.”

“Highly interesting, I’m sure !” murmured a flat-nosed, flabby-cheeked old student, whom one would scarcely have accredited with thinking so.

“I beg your pardon—did you say the motion had anything to do with it ?” asked Mr Tattergast, reverently.

“No, sir,” said the speaker, irately ; “the word I used was oceans.”

“Very stupid of me : ocean and motion are so nearly alike, I lost my gravity !”

The gentleman caught at the word. “I *could* speak to you about gravity, but I’ll confine myself to fluids.”

“Don’t study us !” put in Mr Tattergast.

“Sir ?” asked the other, angrily.

“I was about to say, won’t the study of fluids improve one’s acquaintance with gravity ?”

“Oh, very much so ! I ask your pardon ; I misunderstood you. Yes, the preponderance of weight, and balance of attraction, are demonstrated by the principles of fluids before gravity is recognized.”

“Thank you. I thought so. I have observed it, or heard it observed ; you will excuse my defining which—my memory——”

“Do not apologize, pray ; and I was going to remark that the exhalation of ozone is regulated by depth.”

"I hope not," ventured the moral but troublesome leader of the opposition.

"Oh, it is scientifically accounted for, sir! Not the least impressive of the phenomena connected with the subject are the great rising currents of water in certain parts of this ocean, which are without a particle of salt, and in fact possess all the constituents of fresh earthy water, strongly impregnated with the gases of inland streams. Bubbling up thus, we seek——"

"Reminds me of phenomena in our county known as 'bubble and squeak;' don't it you?" to the most severe-looking of those near to him; and the indignant gentleman addressed stared at the blank expression of Mr Tattergast with disgust.

"Good heavens! gentlemen," exclaimed the professor, indignantly, "I do believe this young man is playing the fool with us." And he sat down hurriedly, but, owing to miscalculation of latitude, on the stout gentleman's knee, who sent him off scientifically.

"Such is life, sir!" said the unabashed Tattergast to a ponderous thinker, who had hitherto been lost in mental evolution. He laid a forefinger weightily on the Tattergast, peering at him from yellow eyes over violet glasses, and remarked, with smothered importance, "Sir, life is a complex geometric problem, which I have been studying ever since I was set in the midst of it; and it is a problem of great nicety, with astonishingly well-balanced lines, preponderating angularly sometimes, but for the most part regulated upon a system of extraordinary perfection."

"No doubt," said Mr Tattergast; "but I happen only to have come in the way of the angles."

"Angles are very fine; they put a point upon destiny."

"Too fine a point, as a rule," remarked Merry; adding, "I have always thought life, at the outset, to be like a crisp bank-note."

"May I inquire in what way?" asked a precise person, who carried contempt for all such flimsy productions upon the face of him.

"Yes, sir; it is soon changed." Mr Tattergast leisurely plucked at his necktie, unloosened it, tied it more primly, and stared at the precise gentleman in return for his inquisitive look.

"From its crispness, do you mean, sir?" asked a thin, rigid-looking individual.

"No, sir; in its value."

The other, who was a saving, sparing, not to say stingy genius, left the cabin, and the ready disciple of happiness, not saving, sparing, nor stingy, looked around for any more giants who might be ready for a word. But no. It had gradually dawned upon their owlish understanding that this person was not quite what one may call respectable, and they were all so very respectable, as much so on board a vessel as in their respective ant-hills at home. This was apparently one of those migratory, vagrant young men, for whom they often mourned in secret; regarding them as lost spirits and heirs of perdition, partaking but too abundantly of the sardonic, restless, careless levity of their chief, who goeth about to devour men of science and decorum, and all else dependent upon propriety he can engorge within his maw.

Merry had several times noticed a handsome lad of unusual activity, and of such respectful although manly bearing when spoken to by the officers, that he felt interested in the boy, and one day questioned the coxswain concerning him. "A beginner, working his passage out," said his informant; "name George Herrick, a tidy lad, and one day will make a seaman."

Next time George Herrick came in Merry Tattergast's way, the boy heard himself called by name, and in a tone of voice very unlike what he had been accustomed to on board ship. He crossed to the negligent-looking stranger standing under the rustling sails when most of the other gentlemen were below over their grog.

"Do I behold the germ of a great navigator in you, young man?" carelessly asked the eccentric person who accosted him.

Either the kindness or the drollery about him caused the boy to laugh; but, with surprise, he replied, "I think not; the work is too hard for me."

"Ah," said the other with complacency, "I am glad that, like me, you have no intention of killing yourself by hard work. But acquaint me, if you will, with the motive of your being here?"

"I have just left school. My friends wished to bind me to a warehouse life. I know I should hate it, so came away to sea, and—I don't like this much better."

"Rather worse of the two, I should think. But now, young gentleman, don't it strike you that you have behaved in rather a reprehensible manner after all the money your friends have expended on your education?" Then seeing him hang his head ashamedly, yet still with a look of spirit and resolution, he added, "But there, I can see you in no sense belong to the intractable; you have acted with convictions, and will be more likely to do credit to than to disgrace whatever you take up with." And the boy looked so grateful for that word of praise, so happy at not being further blamed, it quite touched the heart of Merry Tattergast. And it was like him to say, "I am going to make you a present, George Herrick, and its worth will be determined by the value you put upon it." The boy looked up wonderingly. "I am going to give you the inestimable boon of my friendship." Saying which he held forth his hand, took that of Herrick's, and gave it a sound confirmatory shake. Friendships are made quicker, very often are worth more, on sea than on land. Herrick thought his new friend of singularly unfettered behaviour; but the gentleness underlying the quaintness prepossessed him, while the unerring instinct which invariably knits those of Bohemian inclinations was the chief introduction. "Thank you, sir," said Herrick, bluntly, the bluntness that means a thing and sticks to it; then he added, after a moment's reflection, "I have no friend on board; these fellows don't do after an attachment to a loved schoolmate from whom I was divided when I left." Mr Tattergast looked up at the rough dalliance of the wind with the sails, looked down at the ruddy colour on the handsome face beside him, at the unspoilt light in the clear eyes, and asked, with some solicitude, "But what are you going to do, my boy, when you get to New York?" To which sensible

question Master Herrick replied thus: "When at school I used to think I would give anything to see the world—travel from place to place; and I had a fancy for joining something in the travelling-show way; a panorama is as respectable as anything." "And so it is," replied Mr Tattergast, bringing his hands down approvingly upon his young friend's shoulders, "especially when favoured with the services of any one like you, or myself say. Well, if when we happily return to England, you contemplate so doing, and any influence I possess can get you into so honourable a berth, it shall be exerted in your favour. How about when we arrive in America?" "I have no plan," said Herrick, gravely, but without concern. "I am working out my passage because I could not pay the cheapest rate. When I reach New York I can leave the ship, or, I daresay, return in her." "The captain seems a genial old fellow?" "I found him very kind—indeed, I haven't much to complain of from any of them." This ended their talk for that occasion, the boy having to go about his duties. The incident relieved the tedium of Merry's life at sea. There was something worth liking in this youngster, with his dauntless love of liberty and freedom. Tattergast admired boyhood always, but especially when, as with Herrick, it enshrined a soul as unopinioned as the sea-gulls careering in the snow. He could not get along with the jejune cargo below, with their affectation and conceit; *l'homme nécessaire* in the right place, that did not strike him as being in the quizzical company of those wiselings. The joyaunce and licence, unrestrainedly his, were opposed to frigid formality and the exceeding-proper when on land, still more so while out at sea. The serried line of waves was less grim, in January even, than were the cold set faces and starched prim manners at the board; and much Mr Tattergast wondered the Gay Gallant did not founder, so over-heavy was the ballast of arrogance. The sight-baffling wintry mists were not more void of sunniness than were those faces, which froze this genius born of sunshine and bred on laughter. The quietless eddies and long waste dashings of the tides were musical, but not those dry, critical words, cutting and paring with scientific exactitude. Eratosthenes tells us that Orpheus

had such love for the sun he would climb the Pangean mountain at daybreak and there wait his rising in order to be the first to hail him. And this erratic rover loved the sunny with almost as ardent an affection, so that being cooped up for several days with reserved and formal people, and surrounded by such cheerless conditions, rather lowered the tone of lightness and don't-carishness upon which he especially prided himself. The Dawn in Egyptian Mythology was depicted as a beautiful boy seated upon a lotus. This flower appears above the water at sunrise and sinks at its setting. Mr Tattergast accepted some such dawn, and through their voyage enjoyed his boy-friend's company to a degree that would have surprised the long-headed gentlemen of the saloon. Had that boy fallen overboard he would have been the first to plunge into the great trough of the sea and take his chance in attempting his rescue, for he thought him far too rare and choice a morsel wherewith to feed the insatiable old monster. At night, when moon and stars came out, clear in the frost-fine air, they stood on deck, regardless of the cold, talking of England and America; the tremulous murmur of the waves, their plashing against the ship, the solitary tramp of the men on watch, the thud of iron rings on the triply-plated metal-work, the solitary cry of some lost sea-mew, the blast soughing through the canvas, beating it broad back against the spars and cordage, the edge-like sudden rustle as the ship cut through streaming blades of the green sea-flag, the play of large jets of foam in the track of the flying vessel, the even, equal, dreamy flowing of the tide; and Merry felt rather a pang at feeling consoled in a measure for Jessie's loss by this new companionship—and yet how like the human! Sorrow and Joy held a long argument once as to which of the two was the more nearly related to Selfishness. They brought out their pedigrees, traced their descent, hunted up the branches, and found they were both so identified with their relative that all trace of relationship was lost; they were one and the same—knit, known, and avoided, as an individual complacency of self.

This youth, bright and beautiful as was Hylas whom Hercules carried away on board the Argo, would not, Merry

hoped, share the fate of that classic boy. He said to him with a heart full of his own sad love affair, "And have you left no little girl at home in England who will be anxious for your safety?" (This was a moonlit conversation remember, where one is privileged to touch on tenderer subjects.) He was holding the boy's hand in his, and he withdrew it almost painfully while he answered, "No." The action did not endorse the word, and Merry playfully pressed the question, yet as though really wishful for the boy to confide in him if he had anything to confide; and he knew most boys have some such secret daintiness by which they set great store. "No sweetheart who cried her pretty eyes out when you came away?" To which Herrick answered, ingenuously, "I liked our master's daughter *very* much, but I let nobody know of it because my friend liked her too."

"And I like you for that piece of conduct anyway, the more so because I couldn't have behaved like it myself."

"You don't know what you could do until you have a friend who 'is more to you than yourself,'" answered the boy softly, thinking of his old schoolfellow, and wondering how he was getting on.

"Well, I confess, I have never been burdened with that luxury: either there was something amiss with me, or something amiss with the other, but we never strack a light with friendship. I'm a ne'er-do-well, young sir, and that doesn't command respect in an age that is chary with its friendship, except upon a basis of specie. But this friend, towards whom you behaved so magnanimously, what has become of him?"

"He is on trial, with a view to being articulated to a firm of Land-surveyors—Messrs Boggis & Blim, of London."

"It's a partnership of prepossessing proper names. I congratulate your friend!" and with a droll shrug of the shoulders, Merry turned his back on the piercingly cold wind that was abroad that night.

"You have not told me your name," said the boy; "will you do so?"

"To be sure;" and he was going to, when caprice, or dis-

like to giving him his masquerading title, led him to say, "Saul Weir!"

"Thank you." And the boy thought that a strange name, whatever he might have thought had he told him the other.

"I like *your* name vastly," said Merry; "or I should if your Christian name was Robert. The old bard, your namesake, is my favourite among all poets." He hummed a verse of *Gather ye Rosebuds while ye may*; and the old lyric sounded oddly in that world of compass and quadrant.

"You are a lover of olden times?" asked Herrick, adding, "I am."

"It would have rejoiced me to have lived with those to whom scallop-shell, staff, scrip, and bottle represented all worldly wealth—before there were any long-heads like my *compagnons de voyage* below, who remind me of Avicen, the learned Arabian, who read Aristotle's *Metaphysics* forty times over, for the supreme pleasure of being able to inform the world that he could not comprehend one syllable throughout them; before there were any of the Albert Hall order of concerts, and instead a band of choice troubadours, wandering from place to place, and, like you and me, intent on seeing all they could for as little as possible. A highly intelligent and entertaining class they were; and it strikes me I've seen some of their descendants in the South, the only really interesting men I have seen. And they dress rather more after my style there. How the long-heads go on about the vanity of the females of the present day! I heard one of them say he didn't believe there was a woman in England who could be taken through a town without stopping to look in the shop-windows; and why don't the men? I think I can tell you. In the days of the Stuarts, when men also studied their exterior, and vied with the best-dressed beauties of the Court in their splendour of apparel, they looked in the windows of their *costumiers* as devotedly as do the ladies of to-day. Their indifference in the present enlightened era does not proceed from any superior virtue, as they would have us believe, but because the hideous modern male costume is so exceptionally ugly, men cannot look upon it in the windows

without a pang. Yes, Herrick, I am a lover of the olden times."

"I had an idea you did not care very much for appearance."

"Depends upon what sort of appearance. I am, happily, satisfied with a bunch of stinging-nettle blossom in an old gallipot, but I should doubtless prefer Tyrian roses in golden urns."

"It seems to me the dolphins have a pretty enjoyable time of it."

"The most sportive existence in creation, sir. I would rather be a dolphin than anything in nature." With a merry laugh he leaned against the taffrail, looking over. "And isn't that one yonder? or a seal?"

The boy looked in the direction indicated; the waves were breaking over something smooth and glossy that seemed to be riding buoyantly upon their surface. A peculiarity about its movement—floating rather than swimming—led Herrick to think it a hollow vessel of some sort. "It looks to me like a barrel," he said. "Curious! Some wreck, I am afraid; there would not be a buoy out there." They called one of the men, and he, by aid of his glass, made it out to be a piece of wreck.

"What do you think of it?" asked Mr Tattergast.

"If I'm not wrong, it's an empty boat: some craft, perhaps, been driven on the reefs by stress of weather." The man fetched the captain, who ordered a boat to be lowered and the derelict secured. The engines were stopped while this was done, and when they had succeeded in hauling it on board, they read this name on it—

* STORMY PETREL *

Mr Tattergast sat down, greatly agitated, the seaman briefly muttering, "Liverpool and New York!" Merry caught him by the arm: "Is it the only vessel of the name?" he asked, hurriedly, clinging to the hope that there might be another belonging to a different company.

"No other leaves the Mersey!" answered the captain, and

that settled it. Terribly, it seemed as though the Treasure was at the bottom of the ocean.

"Did you know some one on board?" asked Herrick, considerably.

"My dear boy, I am taking this precious journey purposely to find a person, as I hoped, who sailed in that very ship!" They all three looked with sympathy. Wind sweeping the decks suddenly seemed cruel to the young man. The melancholy waves' long dirge all at once received interpretation. Tearful beams of pitying stars were now understood, and he was very grave under it—every trace of that jaunty *bonhomie* and *nonchalance* usually characterizing him had disappeared before this ill-fortune. "I am rather disposed to get you to set me down on those reefs you spoke of," he said, seriously; but the captain shook his head, and one of the men spoke thus—

"It would be useless, sir—they're not habitable; no one could take shelter on them and live!"

Merry reflected deeply. "Does it occur to you that any of the poor creatures may have taken to this boat?"

The man answered: "They might have done, but that great storm happened fully a month ago; and where they'd be now it would be difficult to say—picked up though, most like."

"I don't know," said Merry, dubiously; "traffic isn't so thick on the Atlantic as on London Bridge. It would be no great wonder if their skeletons still float about on rafts." The horrible idea caused the boy to shudder. "Let the closest watch be kept," said the captain, "so that we may not at least pass anything." Then saying "Good night" to Merry, he released the men to their duty.

"I do so wish I could help you," said Herrick, with thoughtful solicitude.

"You can, and greatly: keep a look-out in the daytime while I am sleeping, and at night I will watch here. We cannot tell but it may be of use."

"I will do so very carefully."

"Thanks, Herrick; many thanks. And now run off to

your berth and get some sleep." With a cordial handshaking they parted, Tattergast falling into the attitude of sentinel.

All night he stood and watched the waves, sometimes walking to and fro to restore the stagnant circulation, scanned the prospect far and near, swept the grey flood with an eagle's vision, and also looked closer, immediately around, and down under the shadow of the ship. "If a wreck," he murmured, "some may have escaped; she may be amongst them!" He listened with eager intentness in case any cry, or low wail, or distant shout, should be forth upon the night; and he thought to himself, "How I wish that honest, practical Saul Weir, my namesake, was with me! he might devise some plan in this emergency." But he felt to be doing his best as it was, in his own and his namesake's cause. All night he watched without discovery; time and tide bore no reward: and in the morning when Herrick was about, he retired from his post to seek an hour or two's sleep.

The incident was talked of, and the sleeper not disturbed. One can feel for a man so placed while on board with him in the track of the pursued vessel, whatever one may do in the easy-chair at home. But at ten o'clock Herrick went privately to him, and having awakened him, said they were passing the Cutter Rocks, and he thought he had discerned a figure on the topmost crag, but he was not sure. Tattergast was up and on deck in a few minutes. Borrowing a glass he made out a figure as the boy had said. He at once communicated with the captain, and begged of him to allow some of the men to put off in one of the boats and board the island reef. The captain was very willing to aid by all means in his power; and if human souls were there, jeopardized, to rescue them became not only his desire but his duty. A boat put off, manned by six men and Tattergast, and after rough rowing, the rugged base of the crags was reached. The violence of the surf made landing hazardous, if not impossible, as there was imminent risk of their small craft being broken upon the rocks. It was rendered unnecessary by the appearance of a singular being, who, partly sliding down and

partly rolling round, reached the basement somehow, and shouted that he would swim out to them, and that no one else was on the rock. Good as his word he plunged in, porpoise-fashion, and swam to them. When they saw his sleek, wet head, with its round, shorn, smooth effect, bobbing up and down, they surmised wonderingly whether it was some savage of Atlantic isles or really a member of the ill-fated Petrel; but when he cried out, "I've bin on the wait a good month for you, and have had to camp out, I guess!" they knew him to be of America. Having got him into the boat he was questioned freely, and he explained the circumstances, so far as the wreck of the Petrel and his escape were concerned, and sympathy unlimited was doled out to him. On board the ship also, crew and passengers besieged the man with questions,—the ladies especially listening with eager horror to his graphic narration of his hardships on the rock. Tattergast (who had been exceedingly surprised to see again the man who had once accosted him in Ramsgate) was compelled to withhold his own interested questions until public curiosity was appeased. Later on in the day he attached himself to the rescued person, and invited him to gossip if he would. The person would, and commenced, "Now, if I'd bin the captin o' that air wessel, I'd a saved her, sure as griddles!"

"I've no doubt of it," assented Mr Tattergast, politely, "although your reference to Griddles is vague?"

"Cakes: a saying t'other side of the Wahsatch. Captin hadn't grit!"

"Do you mean the ship was without ballast?"

"No, I don't! And what the tarnation lick do you put your own construction on my meaning for? It's peskily rude, I take it,—so there!"

"Do sit down," said Mr Tattergast, pacifically; "you interest me—you do indeed."

"Well it's a comfort to know that; 't isn't a robustious person like me who wins admiration in the general way."

"Makes a difference being the hero of a shipwreck,—possibly the sole person who escaped?"

"There was another to my knowledge; a darned old woman with nine lives: take a few storms to kiver her, I reckon!"

"Did she escape in one of the boats?"

"It ain't much matter how. She'd pull wool over yer eyes and escape on a fish if there was naught else; and give her a rail, or a broomstick, she'd ride from here to Nevada."

"And did you see no more of your venturesome neighbour?"

"Bless you, no! She was far too obstinate to take things quietly as I should 'a done, wintering on the old point yonder with the peaceful birds. She went squiggling off, and's at the bottom by this, unless picked up; and bad luck to her for want o' civility, say I!"

"Well, one would look for civility where but two, and after being saved from drowning."

"Right you are, stranger, and I owe her a grudge which I'll pay when I get to New York if she turns up; but the worst on it is, I fear she'll be off on another little journey afore I can pick up with her. Oh, I'm mighty attached to Mother Edred, I do assure you!"

This was enough for Mr Tattergast's purpose. It had before occurred to him, remembering Saul's description of the man, that he had strangely enough assisted in rescuing the enemy of the woman instead of the woman herself. His information concerning her fate caused Merry secret anxiety that it was difficult to conceal. He wondered much whether that mention of Nevada was by chance, or whether it had anything to do with the woman's destination, if, happily, she ever reached New York. He here engaged the services of his young friend Herrick.

"Without going into a long story, Herrick, I am anxious to know whether the man picked up is interested in Nevada, or contemplates going there after our arrival. Can you get him to talk about America; tell him you're wanting to know all you can about it, and watch if he hints at what he thinks of doing?"

"Certainly I will, Mr Weir, with pleasure."

"But take care, please, not to mention my name, whatever

you do. I suspect this fellow of foul play. Curiously enough, I was warned of him before leaving England."

"I will be very careful, sir."

"Thanks, Herrick; and as you have been such a good friend, I should like to retain your company after landing."

Herrick had been wishing for it, and thanked this patron very warmly, immediately agreeing.

Well contented with the arrangement also, Mr Tattergast withdrew, to give Herrick the opportunity of talking with the Mormon.

"Wal, juvenile, and what do you want?" asked Mr Luffkin, seeing the boy hanging about, and taken rather by his appearance.

"Oh, if you please, I heard you were an American gentleman, and as I'm going out, hoping to see a little of the great land, I thought perhaps you would tell me something about it."

"Tew be sure I will; and take my word, get over there you'll want to stop. And though for my part I belong to Amerikey revised and purified, in other words to the City of the Saints, the New Jerusalem, I yet honour the States, the greatest thing th' Almighty has done! It's tremenjous, I do assure you; and as I was saying to the boss, your captin, it's the only land worth running a vessel to and from!"

This unsophisticated bombast almost caused Master Herrick to smile, but duly conscious of his part he listened with attention, and said, "I have heard of the greatness of America: and I suppose it isn't immediately near to New York its finest scenery and wildest beauty is to be seen?"

"Why, bless the piccaninny, you must git out o' Jersey State and cross the line—which one may imagine drawn from Cincinnati to Montreal to see the beauties o' natur! It's jist this, Staten and Long Islands is nowhar now! Chicago's the great city o' the Union, and metropolis of all the States; and until you get to Council Bluffs, a good bit further West than that, you ain't repaid, and might as well stop in Europe or any other meadow! Is your father a farmer?"

"No."



"Wal, if he was, an' came along a me out Iowa and Nebraska way, I'd show him what farming means. Some of the farms in our parts is as big as your Yorkshire county; and I suppose that's the chiefest little bit you've got to boast of, eh?"

Without waiting for geographical confirmation, the modest talker concluded his remark, "So it takes a man a fairish time to get his crops in, and collect his flocks for shearing; although, mind you, it isn't 'cause the Gentiles have more land they anyhow come up to our Saints in the art of tillage. You might sit one of our people down in a tamarack swamp, and long afore next fall it wud be rollen waves o' buckwheat. That air is how we raise crops; spelling peace an' prosperity on th' barren earth, and fillen the young fellows' pockets! If you've nought better to do, and wud like it, you shall jine us, an' that's a fact! I'm leased to pass along Salt Lake on my way West; and as you seem flush of health and spirits, I'll take you with me, and find you a comfortable home at Utah."

"Oh, you are going on beyond?" asked George Herrick before replying.

"Ay, I'm going on."

"If I went any of the distance I'd rather go all the way when I was seeing about."

"You air a' cute one, an' this hyar ain't the party to discourage you. We'll go whar dollars air plentiful as bilberries, an' a bowie cuts into a fortin; and di-rectly we git to New York we'll go and spend the evening at the Atlantic Garden or the Bowery, and enjoy it reglar!"

"But where did you say you were bound for? Perhaps you're going too far for me."

"I'll tell you. To Nevada State, where you may see something o' mining; or if you don't like it—and I promise it's rough—thar's the great American desert, whar you'll find plenty of sport. Ugh, but you'd remember that!"

"I'm afraid it's all too rough, sir, for a beginning; and, thanking you, I've a friend who kindly asks my company while staying in America."

"Wal, now, I'm not cantankerous in a general way, but

you dew jist put one out, making belief you'll go, an' the next minit altering yer mind—waugh!"

With sovereign disgust Jediah Lufkin turned upon his heel, while Herrick resumed some occupation on the ship. He saw Mr Weir later, and communicated his news. "The man is going to Nevada—he mentioned 'mining.'"

"Ah, the Silver Mines, doubtless!" Merry reflected. Piece by piece he was picking it up. The woman's son was working at the Mines. Should she reach New York she would, if possible, journey thither. It all seemed clear, and his own course was marked out in a very plain manner. She would have remained a night, probably, in the city, might have made some inquiries concerning the long journey she was entering upon. If he could find out where she had stopped, he would be able to gather, perhaps, whether she took the case with her; and Merry became anxious for the sight of land.

Until the next day, however, restraint had to be put upon impatience, then he heard some one remark that they drew near the New World. The decks were lined with those eager for the first glimpse, who through glasses watched for Staten Island rising through the sleety rain. They saw it, although not until close,—beautiful, luxuriant; villas and picturesque dwelling-places, groves and gardens,—a scene that gladdened every heart. "Superior to Gravesend or Greenwich, I do think," said Tattergast, dryly, at the very elbow of a precise gentleman who resided in the Island. In another hour they were in dock, and after some little delay set foot in New York. There was the usual bustle and confusion, and they were glad when it was over and they could stand at liberty to look about them.

"Well, Herrick, now you've settled up with the captain, we've got over the shipping part of it," said Merry, shaking hands, with a pleasant congratulatory manner. "And now for dinner, my boy; but first, before anything else, a flower for my coat. A weakness of mine," he explained, "the denial of which made the voyage seem longer than it otherwise would have done."

The little luxury was not to be found immediately. They

were in the midst of colossal traffic and the whole world's merchandise, as it appeared. Huge warehouses, dry-goods stores, quays, and tortuous thoroughfares ; a crowd of steamships of the Pacific Mail Company, White Star, State, and Inman Lines ; quaint old-fashioned buildings, offices ; fish and fruit depots ; provision markets ; smallware-dealers of every description ; sales right and left, bartering and huckstering ; import and export in gigantic operation ; and altogether such a scene as would nowhere else be witnessed : culminating in Washington Market, an area of extraordinary business. Manhattan Market was passed further on, a vast red-bricked building of Lombardian architecture. Near to this spacious structure Mr Tattergast was provided with a floral emblem and an ample repast. After which a detour brought them on a line with a squadron of oyster-boats and crowds of oystermen unloading,—one of the most animated scenes of the city. Further along was a dock crowded with fruit-schooners from the tropics. Every hundred yards revealed some stirring exchange of commerce, great shipments, traffic of transport, busy routine of the trade of a hundred ports in one. And finding they might wander on unceasingly, Mr Tattergast suddenly drew up his companion. "I should think this must be the most wonderful sight in the world, but I am forgetting I have something particular to do. We must return to the spot near where we landed, to those streets in the vicinity, in one of which I hope to find some inn or coffee-shop where I shall hear some news of my friend, supposing her to have been rescued and brought on." They accordingly returned to that locality and explored the streets, entering such houses as it seemed probable Mrs Edred might have visited. It was Saturday evening, the streets were thronged, and they made but slow progress. Hustled and jostled by the roughest mass of people even Tattergast ever remembered to have experienced ; recalling in a small degree Wine Street, Bristol, at the hour, another astonishing gathering-place of the tribes and outcasts. Many of the houses they entered seemed to be in the hands of Irish owners, and Merry's explanation of his errand evoked specimens of the brogue at its richest ; others

were held by the Yankee pure and simple, and Brother Jonathan replied smartly to the pleasantly put questions of the strangers. All were civil, so ingratiating were his mien and manner, and so pleasing his happy-looking face. Up to nine o'clock they had explored in company, then Merry said, "As time is valuable, for I should like to be off West on Monday if we ascertain our particulars, suppose we separate? Do you take that direction and I'll take this, and we'll meet at the bottom of Christopher Street, close to where we saw the oyster-barges, at eleven o'clock punctual, supposing we can ever find that lively spot again. Adieu: take care of yourself mind, for I cannot do without you now." The kind smile accompanying the words was protection in itself, and impetus. The young sailor went cheerfully on his way, while Merry turned up a dusky, grimy bypath, by no means luminously illustrating New York's liberality in the matter of lighting up. Yet he had been told the old woman whose trail he was on was very peculiar, and it might have occurred to her to go to the most retired and ill-lighted quarter she could find. The houses hereabout were old, quaint enough for Chester itself, and seen by this dim light it was like being transported back into some Old World city. He stood alone, below the eaves, leaning against the lintel of one of the tenements, thinking of a past growing so shadowy now, and musing on present and future events and their possible solution. These houses, with the exception of some half-dozen private residences, were let out in flats to families, the basement being utilized for the lodging of casual patrons; and here Mr Tattergast thought it more probable, remembering the old woman's place in Ramsgate, Noeba Edred would stop for the night or longer. Accordingly he entered these in turn, describing his business briefly, and with such felicitous portraiture of the person he was searching for as would leave no possibility of her not being remembered had she stayed there. And at one of them he heard of some such woman,—a skinny, half-starved creature she was described, who had barely recovered from an attack of fever, and who had undergone shocking privations after being shipwrecked. Yes, there could be no doubt that he

had fallen upon the track—was successful at last. The main point was established: the woman was saved—had reached New York. The next to establish was twofold—whether she had the case with her, and if she had gone on for Nevada. Here again the energetic pursuer was rewarded—the woman had a case with her, in the care of which she seemed monstrously particular; and she had put a variety of questions respecting Nevada. The woman had rested two days, picking up strength and obstinacy, said the informant, and then left, taking her case and marching off with the decision of a trapper. It all pleased Tattergast well, for it seemed as though, in spite of that disastrous shipwreck, he should come up with the woman yet.

“If I had known of all this, Noeba, I would have made a nearer appointment last time we parted;” saying which pleasantly, he retraced his way to Christopher Street, where he found Herrick awaiting him. “Found her out!” cried Tattergast, before the boy had time to explain his failure; “and we start on her trail on Monday. Now for some respectable quarters for the night, and to-morrow, if fine, we will see a little of New York. But I must telegraph our safe arrival and ultimate destination to England.” They succeeded in obtaining directions how to find a telegraph office where a message could be transmitted to England, and after Merry had concluded this somewhat costly duty they walked on until they passed through the unusually busy quarter which extends from the Battery to Canal Street, where every product known to the supplier of provisions is offered for sale; a confusion of tongues and excitable element they were glad to escape from, and reach a quieter part of the thronged city. A homely sojourning-place was chosen, where comfortably ensconced they chatted an hour away and then retired to bed.

The next day they were up early, wishing to see all they could of the city.

“Whatever you do, see Fifth Avenue after morning service,” their landlord said in reply to Merry’s question concerning the course they had better take. In compliance with this advice they proceeded thither at that time, but not to

stay. If Merry hated one thing more than another, it was meeting a host of showily-attired people, just out of church; on the smug, supercilious promenade; affectedly handling Prayer-books and Bibles; on the broad gossip, with covert-sneering criticism, annihilating pariahs with their supreme and magnificent importance. We can do this sort of thing very well in Great Britain, but New York surpasses us. Fifth Avenue is the most famous Sunday four miles in the world; every one who is any one makes a point of there walking after morning service, and the entire species known as No-One attend to look on.

Mr Tattergast and his faithful sprite found the way to one of Delmonico's gastronomic establishments. Rather beyond their means, but being their only Sunday in New York, it was launching out justifiably. There also Merry wrote a characteristic letter to Saul Weir, acquainting him with full details of the progress made thus far, and announcing the big journey ahead.

After that they had a glimpse of Central Park, with its picturesque lakes (where swans floated gracefully near the shores), its temples and grots and ornamental sculpture, and, it must be confessed, sculpture not ornamental; for thither on Sunday afternoon comes a concourse that compels the glorious mixed crowd of Victoria and Battersea to hide its Fraternity-and-Equality-head. By Harlem River excursion-steamer our friends next visited the High Bridge, a colossal granite construction, spanning valley and river, where the former is a quarter of mile in width and the latter six hundred and twenty feet. Other points of interest were also visited, and in the evening they returned to the city well satisfied with their day's acquaintance with New York and its suburbs.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE TREASURE IN THE FAR WEST.

HAVING had few settled abiding-places in his time, and having pitched his tent so often to suit the idle fancy of the hour, this enforced pilgrimage did not embarrass Mr Tattergast, who was accustomed to say, "Anywhere between Scarborough and San Francisco, but I must really draw a line at the Pacific!"

In New York Mr Tattergast discovered such great variety, and so much to his taste, that it was with reluctance he turned his thoughts to the West; but his work was only half accomplished, and he felt that the most indomitable activity was necessary in following up the clue to the Treasure. He was upon his mettle, and having come so far and achieved so little, he naturally determined upon bolder attempt.

Even on Broadway, with all its cosmopolitan throng, Merry Tattergast attracted notice. His graceful and indifferent, yet observant negligence, gained many a passing glance; and while one recognised in him the notorious Lord Tilbury, hero of a hundred scandals, the *preux chevalier* of Parisian *beaux esprits*—another thought him an English artist (probably from his emotional, involuntary method of ambulation), overcome by the wonders of their city. These are the penalties of irregular and informal lives: without any special effort one becomes an object of note, even sometimes to the honour of taking photograph-place in the shop-windows, with an undressed actress on one side and a stern-looking divine on the other, until one sighs for the old black-profile days when photographs were not, nor yet the hideous wood-block portraits of the cheap illustrated newspapers.

This Bohemian—this Quixotic knight of rambling and uncertain roads—this eccentric, happy-humoured *voyageur*, had not arrived at popularity beyond the platform of a panorama, and he knew that, however much the public attention was caught, it could be of no fame or merit; so with the *sang froid* he would have displayed if marshalled by tip-staves, he stared back sweetly at the enlightened citizens of New York, pleased to be looked at, pleased to return the look.

At some of the excellent hotels of this fine city, tickets may be purchased for the through route to the West. At the Metropolitan Mr Tattergast secured two of these, and all necessary particulars. They had yet a couple of hours to spare, and before taking the ferry-boat to the railroad depot, they looked about them. Mr Tattergast had picked up an immense deal of information from that habit of looking about him. He was going into wild regions, and the last hour or two in the city was full of interest. The knowledge or belief that Noeba Edred had succeeded in pushing her venturesome way in the direction of Nevada put Merry in capital spirits, and he viewed the busy streets with delight. A city is beautiful; with all the meannesses of humanity there centred, a city is still beautiful: human life interleaved with human law struggles on with men's interests perpetually; shadows and troubles may be dashed like blots on the picture, but with this and much else there is something about a city that is, always has been, and ever will be, absorbingly interesting and exceedingly beautiful.

Mr Tattergast enjoyed the enthusiasm displayed by his young companion, upon whom New York broke with startling surprise. Merry had derived no little consolation from this boy's sympathy and help, and he would never forget his kindness when that news of the wreck fell like a shock. Nothing so reconciles us to misfortune as the presence of a friend and the absence of an enemy; thus supported, the worst of troubles may be looked in the face. The boyish freshness of Merry's nature made him the very pleasantest companion a spirited boy could have. Herrick's liking for his travelled acquaintance increased daily. To attach a boy to

one thus, with the grand faithfulness the poor brutes idealize, is one of the most gratifying and delectable experiences a noble and chivalrous character can recall in "those twelve hostleries of Time called months,"—as Emile Souvestre fancifully terms them. Merry threw aside his age and entered fully, joyously, and frankly into the bright and buoyant zest with which Herrick enjoyed the sights of the town, so far as they could be seen in the time at their disposal. The stores, with their varied display, were alone sufficient to bewilder; added to which, the bustling traffic of the streets and thronged pathways, the great stream of earnest men, the fashionably-attired ladies, children dressed in style so advanced, all so diverse and bizarre; stamping a series of glittering scenes upon the mind, flushed with a picturesque, emphatic tone, the most sated epicurean student of countries would never afterwards forget. Thirteen days at sea improved the impression,—for cities always strike one most favourably on coming off a voyage.

Very naturally this young man, connected with an entertainment, noted the places of amusement with especial interest, and he said to his companion, "I wish I had time to look in at all these. The cultivation and refinement of a city are indicated, firstly, by its churches, and secondly, by its theatres."

"A wide difference," said Herrick, sensibly.

"Just so; but it is the counterpoise which constitutes the proof. You will find that a town deficient in one or the other, is also lacking in spirit, progress, and morality."

"Dr Virgil often told us theatres were opposed to morality."

"The theatre acts as the scarifier to the church, clears the air of impurities that the *religieux* may breathe a higher atmosphere; it carries off festering and contaminating influences that would else be rankling mischievously, to the detriment of the good work of the church."

"Is not this rather a new view?"

"We are in a new world, and must adapt ourselves. Tolerance is everything. We are not sufficiently grateful for tolerance. Whether we know it or not, the natures of the best among us bristle with points that are antagonistic and

annoying; there is much in us others have to bear with, and I think we are not properly grateful for tolerance. Desperately mean as most people are, their ingratitude for forbearance is a cardinal failing."

There were several little things to buy and look after, for in America as elsewhere, at the last moment, straps won't buckle, keys won't lock, trunks won't close, note-book, sketch-book, guide-book, and cigar-case are mislaid; there was a hurried march half down Fifth Avenue, a hurried tea-dinner at a modest hotel, a snap at one or two papers—and what a treat it was to buy a paper once again!—a rush into a florist's, with quite an extravagant purchase for Merry Tattergast, and they were off, bound for Elko, the station for the White Pine Mines, *via* Hudson River, New York Central, Great Western, Michigan Central, Burlington and Missouri, Union Pacific, and Central Pacific Railways.

A fresh, cold wind was blowing over the great sweeps of flat unbroken grass-land. Mr Tattergast walked about the railway car and smoked: an English clergyman would esteem it a favour if he would leave off smoking, or change to an adjoining car. He looked benignly on the divine, and extinguished the cigar. Mr Tattergast sat down, and began reading the evening paper: it rustled, and an elderly, angular lady next him screamed. He glanced with commiseration in her direction, when she plaintively piped, "Excuse me, sir, but do you think there will be an accident?" Mr Tattergast, after the manner of the countryman in the metropolis, assured her he was quite a stranger in that part, and was unable to form an opinion. He took sherry from his flask: an unwholesome-looking being, with JENKINSON, *Brooklyn*, worked into his travelling-rug, objected to the smell of sherry, which turned him! Mr Tattergast sweetly screwed the top on the flask, and apologised; while the being grunted his obligation. The Associate of Dobson's retired within himself,—taking a quiet, studious observation of humanity on a night-train of the Hudson River Rail; speculating wildly concerning this man's dollars and that girl's lovers—whether the shrewd American divine in the corner was Talmage, and if the slim youth with the roll of

theatrical posters was Barnum's bill-sticker *en route* for Saratoga. The great circle of stars—a sight alone worth the journey to Hudson to see—blazed with splendour, witnessed notably from this continent. The boundless and beautiful fields stretched duskily; forges glowed fiercely on their line of route, brown armourers working upon massy plates, fumes and red spiral columns rising luridly, to be left far behind. It was all weirdly fascinating—the boy with the creative fancy of youth imagining fantastic wonderland, the other with the reflective thought of manhood looking with awe at the celestial spheres deep-fixed in one dead-blue immensity. The great slopes yielded aroma of winter's sparing laboratory, grateful after the sea-sameness of odour under the dominion of Neptune's trident. It looked a burly, rough, Titanic land they passed through—a land "shaggy with wood," as Emerson vigorously says—a land with wild ways innumerable,—yet abounding in scattered hamlets, homesteads, sheep-sheds, out-buildings of great grazing-tracks, rich with herbage, waving with a silver sheen where high rank grass was laid by the wind.

At Hudson they stretched their legs, had some coffee, saw enormous droves of sheep destined for the plains at foot of the magnificent White Mountains, bought a book of American humour, rescued the timid lady from a state of uncertainty concerning Indians, were spectators of an imposing tableau by authorities of the line—and off for Albany, the capital of the State of New York. As the majority of his fellow-travellers were enjoying a smooth undisturbed repose, Mr Tattergast joined them, and was soon back with Jessie, whom the novelty and hurry of events caused him sometimes a long thought-absence from. Herrick could not sleep, all was so new and strange—the scenes they passed through so startling to one accustomed for eight long years to the quiet Warwickshire landscape. And Herrick felt anxiety concerning his parents: he had written to them frequently, and immediately upon arrival in New York; yet he knew well the sorrow the step he had taken must have caused them, and it disturbed him in this vast new world where he felt so separated from all ties of childhood and kinship. To Penryllon also he had

written in terms of the warmest affection, glowingly describing the day's romance, and detailing his friendship with handsome Mr Saul Weir, with whom he was going to the West.

"ALBANY" called lustily, ALBANY painted largely: the sleepers awoke to find that stopping-place one of considerable size and importance; enough could be seen of the spacious well-planned edifices, and numerous public buildings, to indicate the opulence of the capital. The *cuisine* of the cars was so perfect that there existed no necessity, as in England, to devote every minute of the pauses upon their journey to the refreshment interiors. Mr Tattergast amused his leisure by noting the types of character upon that motley stage, the platform. A beneficent-looking divine, walking with a measured swing, ill disguising a self-conscious auto-pomposity, was an important figure to be picked out: a fashionable doctor of a fashionable temple, who pieced reputations like old china, and gave cure gratis at his church-surgery in all cases of bruised loves, broken hearts, and tarnished virtue. An imposing-looking woman with commanding carriage, dressed in dense purple velvet heavily bordered with costly furs; a senator's widow, rich, accomplished; a popular writer, her society was much courted: she had two men-servants in attendance, a more familiar attendance than in England, where that plan is found to answer best which places the greatest distance between familiarity and attendance. Some of the younger ladies Mr Tattergast thought very beautiful; but even these, thanks to the climate, lacked the superb complexion of English women. The little dark man was a Birmingham jeweller, vulgar and intrusive, with profound contempt for the dry, sharp Americans, off whose keenness he delighted to take the edge: he reckoned every one according to the weight of gold dangling in front, balanced the silver spoons at table on his olive finger, talked by the ounce and thought by the carat, and never gave the waiters a groat. This person not charming Mr Tattergast, he studied next a hard-looking, scrupulously neat gentleman, a cross in appearance between a banker and a detective, who eyed every man and woman as though searching for their character, and almost wanting a reference before walking past

them ; it was a Chicago merchant, to whom, by right of rasing, grasping business, all Illinois should have belonged. He had amassed a colossal fortune ; never allowed pin-money to a wife he was pleased to think was endowed with extravagance, and whom he cordially detested because she did not understand figures ; every member of his numerous establishments he had secured cheap, and would underpay to the day of his death. The great bell was rung (and ringing in the States *is* ringing), passengers were seated, the engine shrilly cleared Albany depot, and the train was flying across the plains for Rome.

A neighbour of Mr Tattergast's, who owned a sheep-farm near the latter place, endeavoured to draw him into conversation ; but as it was solely on live stock (the one thing on earth Merry did not understand or take interest in), and the speaker being more broadly nasal than his provincial countrymen generally, the attempt was unsuccessful, the " Britisher " lapsing into silence, the Roman commencing the disposition of an enormous sausage-roll—one of a species indigenous to his part, into the composition of which every ingredient of the animal and vegetable kingdoms seemed to enter in relative proportion, and which was so constructed, compiled, reared, or whatever the process may be termed, that one of them would, apparently, provide the settler, his family, and his shepherds with odorous provision for a week. At Rome they saw an original patriarch of the Everlasting Desert. He attracted curiosity ; and had he not been sitting on a tub, with a cast of inexpressible weariness, he would have looked venerable and nomadic. Mr Tattergast, when the train glided on, looked back at him with filial interest.

By the time Rome and Rochester were passed, and NIAGARA was reached, the passengers felt to be making progress upon their route. There was no leisure to visit the premier attraction of America and Canada, and they had to be content with buying views of the Falls and discussing its features. Various people from the Southern States entered the cars at Niagara. Fresh faces appeared in the car where Mr Tattergast was sitting, and he remarked a superiority of tone, socially and intellectually. Conversation discarded commerce, and embraced

science and literature. Walt Whitman and Joaquin Miller were in the valise of one or another; and altogether sociability increased. Merry indulged freely in conversation, with less *badinage* than sometimes marked his contribution to the general gossip. He shone indeed, and entertained his graver companions. We have always thought that every witty and amusing man who diverts his dull fellow-travellers by good eccentric comedy should be recouped his entire expenses by the company his cheerfulness enlivened. Many a natural comedian deserves the salary of a "star" upon a long journey; but it generally happens these brilliant fellows are well-bred, well-to-do men, to whom one could only offer a cigar.

Of all the States of America, perhaps State Michigan is the most romantic. It is a new world literally. The very air, after leaving Detroit city, is freighted heavily with poem, story, and legend. It is classic ground, whereon the red man has played his thrilling drama, recorded in the Iliad of the mighty hunting-grounds lying between Lakes Michigan and Huron. Verdure is as rich as in the tropics; glimpses of a flowery land break upon one bewilderingly; wild lilies reaching above the heads of Indian maidens, surmounted by the plumes and pennons of tawny ferns; long reaches of the crimson phlox, making tall clover colourless by contrast. The slopes seem inwrought with gold where fennel patterns out its lustre on the gracious earth; blue succory intertwines its rare design, and club-moss flushes the russet duskiness where the ground-pine curls its course. Maple-swamps glow with delicate tints; scrub-oaks, brown and tangled, shade the lovely prairie-cups, and form espaliers for gorgeous-flowering creepers, the paradise of the bobolink and hangbird. A supernal land, where we expect to see the sweet moccasin-flowers trampled by bison-herds; where we dream of billowy savannas, and fancy the red men on their lakes, with barks whose prows of quaint device are hung with chaplets of their woods' red roses. There is extra stateliness in the trees, more splendid colour on the sky, deeper and grander melody in forest and jungle orchestra. No city in the world is more romantically situated than Detroit—the starting-point for the three great lakes, Erie on



the left, Huron on the right, Michigan ahead, and to which some were bound for the "Garden City," CHICAGO.

Here, supposing the Mormon had gone by the "Iron" or Pittsburg route, they might meet; and Mr Tattergast looked sharply out for the person he considered it downright ill-fortune to have rescued when he was so admirably provided for. That Jediah also would be upon his mettle, and would, without loss of time, proceed to the Mines, Tattergast did not doubt; and his supreme object was to forestall the crafty Mormon.

At Chicago there was a long wait. It is the chief stopping-place and most important business centre between New York and San Francisco. Two hundred and fifty trains leave and arrive daily. The fast and furious order of things there prevailing caused Mr Tattergast to exclaim, "Well, they may call this the Garden City, but to my mind it is very much of the city and very little of the garden." To tell the truth, it made his head ache, even in that short time, and he was far from desiring longer intercourse; and how any one could travel nine hundred miles (the distance from New York) purposely to see it, as many do, was more than he could understand. Two men of Chicago (they hate to be called gentlemen even if millionaires) entered the car; and those two men knew more, in less words and brisker style, than all the rest in the train put together. It is remarked, in reference to the Styx Service, that the most troublesome shades of all are such as arrive from Chicago; they are said to be the only ex-mortals Cerberus is afraid of. This may or may not be complimentary, just according to the view taken of it.

Off again; and of all the three thousand five hundred miles of rail between New York and San Francisco, the journey through Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska is admitted the most interesting. The travellers were at the close of their second day: it was twilight when the train steamed out of Chicago; thus a portion of the route would be lost to sight except as revealed by the colourless moonlight. A prairie district, where the entire range of edible grain—maize, wheat, rye, barley, oats, rice, and millet received cultivation. The native grasses forming the pasture of the buffalo and antelope provide luxuriant

feed for stock, immense quantities of which the travellers saw from the cars. Hale and hearty English farmers, passed at work by the line, would take their hats off and wave them, shouting "God save the Queen!" They were generally sure that a sprinkling of English would be in the train. And little English children in the farm-gardens waved hands and shouted gleefully, while smiling English matrons in the doorways looked happily on. This part of it brought tears to George Herrick's eyes, and even his companion felt affected. When they came to the salt and barren plains which stretch away to the Rocky Mountains, there was but little to please the eye. Suggestive heaps of human and animal bones told of privations, death by thirst, or attacks from marauding tribes. Given over to obscene birds and beasts of prey, skeletons were bleached by the sun and sharp salt winds, the last vestige of unfortunate caravans come to destruction in the plains. The prairie-dog—popularly described in the country it favours as an "unmitigated cuss"—looks up from thousands of holes in the sand. "Them thar tracks air the blasty reaches of the howling waste!" was the poetical and pithy summary, when Merry politely asked about the curious part they were at.

In the Rocky Mountain region every mile of line rises to yet higher altitude, until at Sherman, that somewhat dreary stopping-place, the Pacific railroad—example of wondrous engineering—is at an elevation of eight thousand feet. As the famous Wahsatch Mountains were neared, excitement amongst those familiar with the route warned the travellers of the approach of something wonderfully fine. Nor were they disappointed: the line had been constructed through scenery of the most boldly romantic order. Rocks piled upon rocks, chaotic yet sublime; towering cliffs, twelve hundred feet in height; gradually ascending mountains; isolated majestic peaks, their summits clothed in perpetual snow. Mighty gorges had been worn in the mountains where the action of turbulent streams had effected the engineering of nature. Nestled among the craggy heights were ponds of sparkling water; solitary pools to which came birds to quench their thirst, and they alone. Between the great cleft ridges shone the sun, and as it lighted

up the colours of the varied walls, and gleamed lustroously on dense red battlements and turrets, it might have been some spectacle from the legends of the Old World. In contrast with this, wide ravines sloping between the mountains were grassy; and verdant belts of green cotton-wood foliage thickly shaded the brow of the cliffs above: basaltic rocks; naked volcanic peaks; a rugged amphitheatre of riven, splintered pinacles; shelving cliffs, with gaps, and stricken precipices, and awful slopes above some misty abyss; the summit dusky with pyramidal pines, castellated with battlements deep in eternal snow, lying clear and sharply defined against the blue sky.

At times a posse of miners on the tramp came into view: much sameness in their general appearance and stalwart muscular *physique*; all wearing broad-brimmed felt-hats, flannel shirts, buckskin trousers; all carrying double-barrelled rifles or six-shot revolvers.

Companies of bear-hunters, again, were noticed scaling the crags: one of them, a brawny giant, waved his hand to the twining line of cars, and fired a succession of shots in honour. Grizzlies, brown bears, and wolves fled to the shelter of the pines; while before them the blue jays flew frightened from the track of the noisy train, and sought the recesses of their odorous forests.

They passed by great arches of overhanging granite, trailed with the blue-flowered lupin and the golden eriogonum. Flocks of mountain sheep dotted the more fertile slopes. Herds of Indian horses were discerned through the trails of moss and lichen streaming from the trees. Now and then a huge black bear drew itself sluggishly across some path worn by the miners and hunters. Eagles hovered above the crevasses; the mallard, loon, bald-pate, teal, and curlew occasionally started into view; while right and left sported the raccoon and wolverine.

As the train steamed through the great cañons forming the finest passage of the Wahsatch, they were on the borders of Mormon country. From these mountains the men of Salt Lake City obtain the wood for fuel and constructive purposes. Southward are the Oquirrh Mountains, from the base of which

is quarried the beautiful grey syenite of which the Mormon temple is built. The scenery at this point was majestic in the extreme; and often associated with the terrible, as where huge crows swooped upon a sorry team of cattle fallen over the precipice, their waggon shattered to pieces; while white outlines—the unmistakable outlines of human skeletons—told of drivers who had also gone over. In odd contrast, a cluster of Indians stood posed motionless on one of the cliffs, watching the Pacific train with intentness—statuesque in rough antelope-skins, leaning on their bows; their mules fastened by picket-pins cropping the short grass. Higher still, more silent still, the eland herded; and lofty against the sky some elk proudly tossed its antlers at the very summit of the peaks.

Soon the train was rolling over a white plain, when it became necessary to close the windows to exclude the irritating alkaline dust—a dazzling plain, glittering with particles of mica, strewn with the salt silt as with snow. Interesting and picturesque though Mormon country might be, it was left behind without regret when Nevada was reached.

Glimpses of prairie and plain stretching away to the Sierra Nevada; dense sweeps of grassy land frozen by the blasts from the Rocky Mountains, yet here and there lighted up with hardier flowers of the liliaceous order, whose scent recalls the tropics. In the Prairies and Savannas there is never that absolute dearth of vegetation occasionally witnessed on the Pampas and Llanos. Neither is the odour of marshes, miasmata, and putrid water observable in Nevada during winter, as is frequently the case while hot weather lasts. Sometimes the travellers saw curious clumps of bright-coloured plants, seemingly isolated: it was the red mallow-wort; and the rubus, with large leaves spread around its broad, rose-tinted corollas. They were still diligently looking out on the right and left when the train stopped at a station on the border of a town of some size, and the official shouted, “ELKO! FOR WHITE PINE!”

At that, Merry's heart beat quick; anxiously waited for, it was arrived at unexpectedly. With a sort of aroused bewildered feeling, he was conscious the journey was at an end;



and while the train pursued its course towards San Francisco, he with his companion, carrying their portmanteau between them, followed the rugged road to the town.

Elko, (like Carlin, Virginia, Star, Humboldt, Austen, and Aurora, all prosperous mining cities), owes its start to the White Pine Silver Mines, which have brought together a mixed, rough colony, composed of hardy adventurers and honest workers from every land on the face of the globe.

As Merry took in the size of the town he felt that his task did not end with his journey; and the Mines, he learnt, were a long distance off, "across country." Everything was in the rough, the talk a mixture of broad American and mining slang. Altogether things promised coarsely, with the chance of some rough handling if they were not careful. They were at the extremity of civilization, where law was less than licence and the desperadoes many. When a great lode of silver-ore like the Comstock lode is discovered, the brawny athletes of lawless regions flock to it, and outnumber the earnest toilers to whom work is a religion and a science, not a gambling speculation. Very frequently the original discoverers fail to benefit by their find—as, for instance, in the case of the "Comstock," which was detected by two clever young men named Grosch, who possessed a sound practical acquaintance with geology, mineralogy, and metallurgy, and who for years had been searching, while their means gradually lessened, until, when their ledge of silver was found, they were without the power to work it. A man named H. T. P. Comstock, keeping a general trading store at Carson, held the few properties of these poor fellows, and at their death he put in his claim to their discovery. It caused some disturbance (this was in 1859), and crowds rushed in and marked locations for themselves, until upwards of a hundred mines were in working, belonging to some four hundred companies. As soon as the lodes are staked out and shafts formed, and it is ascertained if the ore is in ore-beds or is in the form of bedded veins, work begins in earnest, and a town rises as though by magic, to disappear as quickly when the precious metal becomes exhausted.

Tattergast and Herrick commenced looking out for a place to stop, but this did not at first appear; and they wandered about with their portmanteau, innocently unconscious that somewhere or other usually came with their goods and chattels tied up in a red cotton pocket-handkerchief, and a bundle of implements resting on the left shoulder. Nevertheless some came in better and more prosperous style, and Mr Merry Tattergast was surprised; and not even a miner born, or the hangers-on of the miners born, could have walked with less of the civilized air than did that active explorer and agent in advance. "Wonder what Dobson would think of this place," said he to himself; then to his companion, "Well, Herrick, how does it impress you?"

"Not much, Mr Weir; but it's all in the way, I suppose."

"Yes, my boy, it's all in the way—to the Mine!" Then, seriously, "But isn't it sad that any poor soul should come so far to hunt for silver?"

Unknown to them they had been seen by the Mormon who was loafing at one of the liquor-shanties, and this craftsman leisurely rolled himself up and smoothly rolled himself out, in the easy, greasy style peculiar to Jediah Lufkin. He was uncommonly quick at scenting mischief; and when he saw that boy and young man, and recalled their thirst for information, he thought it looked queer. He remembered then where he had seen the young man before, which he had not done on board ship, and it was in connection with the old woman in Ramsgate. This might or might not bear upon their appearance at White Pine; but he would take care to ferret that out. He had meant taking his leisure over his own piece of work, and to be exceedingly cautious; for Mr Hugh Edred, as he knew already, owed him a grudge he would not fail to pay. He expected that Mrs Edred had acquainted her son with every detail referring to himself; so that he deemed it prudent, and in accord with his normal circularity, to take things leisurely. He leisurely watched the two. His harmless ingratiating rotundity was never more confirmed; he would have rolled round the globe and back to White Pine as compact a sphericity as itself. He inwardly trundled Jediah Lufkin in and out those rude wood-built "ranches," and dwel-

lings of a more ambitious order, and you would have taken him for a thriving, comfortable-going farmer of the West, much startled by the size and importance of Elko, and guilelessly susceptible to its wealth and imposing architecture. This guileless one saw the man and boy enter at that most respectable-looking place of entertainment for man and beast, called in courtesy by its owner "hotel;" and the round person sat down behind a fence to wait until they came out again. When, after an hour's watching, he saw them leave, and saunter up the street looking about them, he sauntered too, in at the bar, inviting the idlers to a "drink." Over that essentially Western process he learnt all he wanted to. The young fellow had been inquiring for one Hugh Edred; and they had directed him to his "ranch" near the Mine, whither he had gone tramping onward. "But if he thinks to blanket in with the Captin it's nat'ral he can't do it, as there's only room for the Captin and his old mother: and it's a right smart chance the young fellar has of chawin' his baccy under the trees, for the Captin's mighty partic'lar the old woman ain't collided agin' nobody else, although whar he does his trading and gets his grub is a darned riddle. The marvel o' his liven alone out thar, in the middle o' rivers, an' bars, an' gulches, an' flats, gits over us; but the Captin's bravery's at th' head o' White Pine, and he'd only need summons the boys, an' a hundred wud be at his back to swinge any runt who dared to irritate him!"

Yes, Mr Lufkin knew better than the reader will, from the detestable *argot* of the Western settlers, all that bluff courage and bold hardihood that had won for the intrepid miner the so-called title of Captain. Feared on the ground as the most unerring marksman, most fierce duellist, and most formidable foe, he enjoyed immunity from the rough usage customary in rougher intercourse, and would put a bullet through the man who attempted it. A stalwart, brawny, muscular giant, with a reputation for violence and merciless prowess that had won recognition of red skins and white, and had gained him a name in Nevada synonymous with ruthless valour and indomitable briskness, a *renommée* open to question, but of an undoubted right hue on the silver side.

Now Mr Lufkin saw his chance.

"I happen to know a little of the young fellow, and if I'm not wrong he'll be lynched for stealing silver out o' sluice-boxes; so keep your eyes open and warn the Captin, for sure as door-nails he's arter robbin' him! String him, comrades, string him, and then he can't do more mischief. He's mighty fond o' bringing the U-nited States officers down on a settlement—in other words, he's an informer!" The unfortunate stranger could have been called nothing so heinous in the eyes of the boisterous fraternity. Many a poor wretch has been lynched on less suspicion. It was evident he was not one of them—he looked like a spy! They would 'spy' him! String him till dead, and break every bone in his body, and serve the next who came on the same errand in the same way. Order must be kept, and rights must be preserved, and the diggers' rights were as good as anybody else's. But it was safely left in the "Captin's" hands; he'd make short work of it. Having stirred up the commotion, Lufkin knew perfectly well it might be left to take care of itself; he had witnessed of many an old experience how small a word may kindle a great crime. But these men, brusque, burly, and unfeeling though many of them were, only wanted what was right, and they accepted no man's guilt on hearsay alone; but if they caught him in the act, woe betide the poor wretch. Justice at the Mines wears a bloody cowl drawn over her eyes. She is inexorable: her hand never wavers; circumstantial evidence never palliates. Her vicegerent for the time being is the man of coolest courage, and most unrelenting and pitiless reputation; in this instance embodied by Captain Hugh Edred. If once it is known an informer has set foot in the camp, the warning is quickly on its round; suspicious eyes watch his every movement, light feet track his footsteps on the swift, silent, sure plan adopted by the reds; and it would be better for him had he never been born. Two scouts now shuffled off to put the "Captin" on his guard—two others disappearing in the track of the strangers, whom we will now accompany.

At the end of the straggling principal street they passed a small store for the sale of firearms and bowie-knives; and Tattergast entering, purchased one each of the latter for him-

self and the boy, also a sturdy useful revolver and ammunition, which he fixed in a belt bought for the purpose: then lightly saying, "Another transformation—but whether buccaneer, corsair, smuggler, or highwayman, it is difficult to decide!" he strode from the store with the reckless, careless dash peculiar to him, and worthy any of the dignitaries he had mentioned. The exclamation was light enough, and uttered with humorous unconcern; but when those in the rear came up with the store, it was interpreted against him.

Tattergast, nevertheless, was no fool, as his purchase will prove. In a rough country he was content to go as a ruffian; and he had a magnificent idea of taking care of himself, for Jessie's sake, if not for his own. How lovely that dear little face did seem from this time and distance! How often he thought of her! He had another reason for care; the boy whom he had brought out to these wild wastes must be preserved in case of danger, even at the cost of his own life. His companionship was company and an immense pleasure, and he would not prove ungrateful for it.

They seemed to wander on for an interminable time. Tattergast did not know whether he had lost the route, or whether the Mine was further than he had supposed; but it appeared as though they would never reach the little log-cabin of the Captain. More wild, more waste, and piercingly cold, this supplementary journey was the first real hardship endured. Now and then miners were passed, grey-shirted, knee-booted, broad-hatted, rough-and-ready fellows, with a civil word, and all of whom considered the Mine as at no great distance off.

Merry fancied it seemed a climate of variable changes, and he decided to keep walking, if more slowly, rather than rest by the wayside during the night: they also had a delicate objection to snakes, which, like the rest of the country, partook of the metally; a copper-colour, upon which the starlight fell with ghastly effect. The creatures have a weakness for blankets, and dispute possession. Merry therefore resolved not to camp out. Master Herrick did not once complain, and amused his friend with lively talk about old school-days; but he had a quiet shudder now and then to himself, and thought

with many a pang of those at home. At times some enormous eagle swooped down and seemed about alighting too close, but was off again on the instant, soaring, with the quivering prey it had seen from some dizzy height, in its beak. Once they passed a number of bones, remains of the victim of some fight, or of an execution according to Lynch. Here and there were blackened ruins of a cabin, and charred traces of its occupants, murdered for their savings; horrible indications of the crime rampant. Up to this time they had not seen a single female, nor child, nor anything gentle and pleasing, since leaving the Pacific train. It presented itself as a grim, unlovely land, abandoned to the feverish seekers after precious metals.

Early in the morning they were passed by a team of mules, and as these were proceeding some distance on the road, the tired travellers accepted the driver's offer and mounted, thus getting over a number of miles. Tattergast rewarded the worthy fellow, with whom he felt sorry to part company. After that they trudged on alone again. About noon they saw a low-pitched log-cabin, upon which some pains had been bestowed. It was situated at a point of extreme loneliness yet remarkable beauty, and its locality seemed to indicate the owner was a passionate lover of nature and solitude. The door was locked, but the window was open, and this bespoke the tenant's liking for air. All this was quite in Tattergast's way, and he took quick and interested inspection. A rough little garden, wherein bloomed bright flowers, surrounded the humble home. He plucked one and set it in his coat, looking down admiringly upon it while knocking at the door. His summons remaining unanswered, he, after some time, took the liberty of looking in at the window. He saw an interior very like an arbour, almost a bower indeed; for luxuriant creepers had penetrated through the interstices and covered the walls and roof. There was a rough blanket-spread cot, an axe-hewn table, a shelf of books, a fireplace built of clay, sacks of flour and potatoes, a junk of pork, a carbine, some pistols, various garments, and a pen-and-ink sketch; the latter so aroused Merry's curiosity he put his head in at the window and took minuter inspection, recog-

nizing to his surprise a rude yet unmistakable drawing of the Herongate, Suffolk, England. He also saw upon the ground a solidly-constructed locker, and near it a wooden case, which from the peculiarity of its make he believed to be the one put together by Saul Weir the carpenter. He had scarcely realized his discovery when he was pulled hastily by Herrick, who said, in a low, frightened voice, "A lot of men in the bush, are watching you—desperate-looking characters."

"Let them watch," answered Mr Tattergast, still with his own fascinated gaze on his namesake's workmanship.

"I'm afraid they mean mischief," remonstrated Herrick.

"So do I," said his friend, walking to the door, with delightful unconcern; "you'll see in a minute."

He inserted his bowie-knife so deftly, the door flew open, and with the coolness of a proprietor he entered and laid a hand on the case. The house was surrounded on the instant. Herrick stood close by his friend. A bearded, rough-looking fellow stepped forward, and, filling the doorway, asked—

"What air yer doin' here, mister? This is no claim o' your'n, I reckon!"

"You reckon wrong, then; I claim this case!" With a hand firm on it.

"By what right, pray?"

"By right of the Government of my Country."

"Hear him?" said the man, looking over his shoulder at those behind, "Government!"

"Which I will explain to Mr Edred if he is here."

"He ain't here; but you shall not be long afore yer have an interview with him, and I kinder fancy he'll make it all right wi' yer for breaking in at his ranch."

A lot of clay-stained miners and shovel-men now pressed in.

"You're reg'larly caved, mister, and had best go docile-like afore the Cap, or it'll be wuss when the boss comes to treat yer case, I dew assure ye!"

Merry turned with indifference to the speaker, and coolly said, "Some points of your jargon are unintelligible, but from what I can make out you want me to go with you. Do I understand it's to Mr Edred at the Mine?"

"Yes, you dew. An' as he's on the shoot in the gin'ral way, the only thing we're afraid of is he'll finish yer afore we can have a hand in it."

"Well, suppose you stand a little further off please, or, by George, I'll finish *you*!"

A hoarse laugh at the miner's expense rewarded the sally.

"There are nine of you," exclaimed Tattergast, contemptuously, "against one man and a boy, fatigued and exhausted by long walking. It confirms all I have heard of honour in this part. Take your hand off that boy, fellow, or I'll sever it!"

Thoroughly inflamed when he saw his young comrade ill-used, Merry sprang to the rescue, and drew forth his bowie-knife. It led to a furious *mêlée* and the pinioning of both, while their weapons were taken possession of by the first speaker. Remonstrance was rendered impossible by gagging; and movement of their limbs even was attended with pain, so tightly were the cords drawn binding them. One of the men carried a rope with a noose at the end, which he dangled tormentingly before the prisoners. Thrust, pushed, and jolted forward, they were driven like cattle before the gang for some distance, until an end was brought to their suffering by abrupt entrance to the Mines, a region of marvels which even their danger did not render them blind to. Little time was left them to look about; hustled along the huge excavated grooves, they were soon in the midst of a busy routine of labour, at once bewildering and stupendous. Small mercy might be looked for there, he could see, as one and another looked up with cruel indifferent glances, accustomed maybe to such sights. Hurried along, they arrived at a shaft and were made to descend in company with two of their guides. Below worked another division of labourers, those hewing out the silver. And if they thought it a strange world above, this nether region must have seemed some curious and costly scene of enchantment. All round the walls, roofing, and in thick dust upon the ground, was SILVER,—one vast interior—a strange subterranean realm, a world of unfathomed treasure, a waste expanse of unpriced value.

And here the bound ones were confronted by a stalwart

bearded hero, worthy the scene and in character with the surrounding, of which he might have been lord and master. He sternly eyed them; while some of the men held lights, others explained the act for which they had been seized; and he seemed to have been prepared for their being brought before him. He listened with the greatest attention, and his broad brown forehead was puckered while, wrathfully and indignantly, he addressed them in deep, sonorous tones—

“By our law, strangers, you are condemned to be hanged by the neck until dead. Five minutes is given you to prepare. Crime is sharp, retribution is swift—you meet with your deserts. The boy’s life is spared.”

Having thus pronounced sentence, with an emphasis that might have passed for solemnity, he strode back with a rugged dignity that impressed Tattergast, desperate though his plight was. Standing beyond, in a shadowy recess, his bulky figure could just be seen; he waved a hand towards a far corner of the mine, where Merry was horrified to see two men proceed, and by means of a hook in the roof raise the rope intended for his execution, while another stood looking down on an old watch. When the time of grace had expired he gave the sign, and the young man was lifted lightly up and carried forward, the noose being dexterously flung around his head before he could move. While the men awaited the last sign, Merry, in his convulsive agony, got rid of the gag, and Saul Weir’s words flashing, as if by inspiration, across his mind, he cried, “Stay, Hugh Edred! I am Saul Weir!”

“Ah!” exclaimed the miner, coming forward in astonishment—“I have heard of you.” Then to the men, with dignified bearing—“Release him! You have made a mistake here!”

Before they could obey, a wizened figure came forward in grotesque relief against the mass of silver. Commandingly, as though some grisly oracle guarding fabulous treasure, she stretched out her long wasted hand and arm, and cried imperiously, “No! The man lies! He is not Saul Weir!”

CHAPTER IX.

THE TWO ISHMAELS.

HUGH EDRED advanced, standing between his mother and the accused, his broad figure massively prominent—a rough, shaggy, handsome giant.

“Why does he claim the name you have told me of?”

“I cannot tell,” she replied, vehemently. “I only know that this is not the man who saved my life.”

Hugh Edred looked quickly in the direction of the accused: it was a moment of imminent peril—a single unhappy phrase might seal his fate.

“Allow me a word with you?” asked Merry, earnestly.

The Captain waved his hand, the men drew back; Herrick went with them. Edred walked briskly to the side of the pinioned Englishman. “Now, sir, be brief, please.”

“The person your mother has mentioned and myself are both descended from a man of historic note named Saul Weir; hence our Christian names being the same. Our ancestor left a large treasure, deposited under the Cedar on Herongate Lawn, from whence it was removed, we are assured, in your interest. We claim it; and I have come out to ask you to inform me of the contents of the document conveyed to you by Mrs Edred, in order that we may take possession of our inheritance.”

The manly way in which the speaker asserted his claim prepossessed the rough, plain-dealing miner.

“This is a strange account,” he said; “it looks truthful, but will need confirming before steps are taken to comply with your request. This you will consider just. As for the

Treasure, when I found what my mother had braved and endured, I candidly told her the bullion wasn't worth it. While she has been doing this for me, I have been working for her and myself, and have put by sufficient for us both without the help of anybody's treasure. Now, stranger, the confirmation I demand is a full explanatory letter from the man who saved my mother's life, written to her here, containing allusion to events with which he and Mrs Edred have been connected, to verify his identity."

"Perfectly fair," said Merry; "this you shall have."

Hugh Edred then released the young man from his uncomfortable position.

"The lad—is it your son? You have not mentioned him."

"A fine youth, with whom I struck up a friendship on board ship, and who has accompanied me to see the West."

Hugh Edred's eyes glittered with delight—he liked that; the boy's spirit resembled his own at the age, when there was similar longing to form acquaintance with that grand, that magnificent country, so inviting to youthful ardour. He beckoned the boy over to him; and the quick, frank manner with which Herrick joined him pleased the stalwart settler. He laid a hand kindly upon his shoulder, saying, "You have risked leaving our little peep-show land, and have come out to see what this world really is?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy, with a glowing cheek.

"And how do you like the West?"

"I think it is majestic!"

"So do I," assented Hugh Edred, simply.

"Your retreat is secluded," remarked Tattergast.

"I built it so purposely; I could not live in a town. I am a follower of the chase, and have picked up the wild, uncivilized proclivities of my red-skinned friends."

"Uncivilized! With those books I saw in your cottage?"

"I confess I am fond of a book now and then; my benefactor was provident enough to have me educated, to counterbalance the stigma of my birth." It was said half mockingly, half as though a lifelong, inextinguishable bitterness; and in a fit of passionate ill-temper he disdainfully completed his commu-

nication—"The benefactor I allude to was my father; and I do not thank him for my birth." Then he turned with sudden abruptness to his mother—"Go with him to the cottage; they are our guests for the present." And waving his hand with an air indicating it was not common for his injunctions to be disregarded, he returned to his occupation, which he resumed as though nothing had happened.

This sudden change in his fortune restored Tattergast's *aplomb*, and with diminution of peril arose corresponding confidence; and really it did not look as though there would be serious difficulty now in gaining the document he had come so far to obtain.

As though her son's word was law, the beginning and ending of law in her regard, the devoted old woman walked straightway from the place, tall, gaunt, and wizened, leading the way without word or look, save one ahead, in the direction her son had instructed.

Apart from the unquestioning indifference, a blind and faithful obedience, there was little of the old appearance about Noeba Edred—none of that irritable, suspicious petulance, or moody and passionate isolation; she had accomplished her great purpose, had found her son, had placed the colossal treasure at his feet. If he was insensible to it, more fool he, but she was not responsible for that. Her work was performed; she now felt passively tranquil, without a hope, or a care, or any interest in life beyond being near her son. She would crouch in the silver-mine, up to her knees in its dust and flakes, until like some figure in metal; she was motionless and always there, watching him at his work, proud of his mighty strength; strumming to herself the achievements of his prowess; piercingly taking in all the muscle and the sinew, and the broad, big chest and shoulders; seeing the great head set firm, seeing the massive arms, seeing the lordly brow curled over and wild as the rocks under clustering brown foliage; and she would laugh within herself ecstatically over the thought—"I bore thee! I, I, I!"

Or in the cottage, while he oiled his old guns, mended his buffalo-gaiters, restrung his bow, attended to provisions or

gardening, and sat down after it to smoke in the Indian fashion, while glancing with interest at the pages of some old well-thumbed book,—she watched it all intently, losing no scrap or morsel of any of his actions, with her fierce leopardess-love devouring every movement of her desert cub; her rugged, feminine instincts admiring his rugged, manly industry—her very soul bowed before the half-savage heroics presented by his person and actions.

The slight effect her long-stored communication made upon him was a blow from which she recovered before her illimitable admiration; which was as strong as her love had been through all the years she was separated from him. It was unexpected, encountering this majestic Ishmaelite ruler in the West, dusky Adonis among giants, a marksman without a peer, crowned by the braves as one who should be their chief, splendid upon the prairie and imperial in the hollowed halls of silver. Much as she had thought of him, it exceeded all her thought's belief or desire, and the semi-worship she gave him was the result.

And there, where women were few, and only the worst and most abandoned of their sex were represented, this coming to him of his mother was very acceptable to Edred; he gave her much honour—a chivalrous respect and veneration, which made the feeling warmer with which she adored him.

* * * * *

It was not long before the turn of events travelled to Elko, and the Mormon heard of the situation. Finding how matters stood he bestirred himself, organized a band of picked roughs—the most desperate rascals he could anyhow get together—and planned a night attack upon the cottage. It was placed so lonely, and at such a remote distance from any habitation, that their designs were favoured by its very position. Lufkin's objects were to obtain the wooden case, and settle an old account with Noeba Edred. The lawless crew he gathered around him would as soon commit murder as theft; and, to make all sure (Captain Hugh Edred being a dangerous customer to tackle), he hired seven ruffians in addition to himself. The nights were dark and the wind was high; they might

effect an entrance unheard: but even then Lufkin determined he would not leave without being quits with the old woman.

While this diabolical plot was hatching, a more peaceful scene was presented at the cottage, where Noeba, once indoors, recognized in her new lodger an old one, and soon questioned Merry kindly concerning his sister. It awoke slumbering emotion, his voice was tremulous when he replied to her, and he began to talk with Herrick about Hugh Edred's books to change the subject.

When Noeba had kindled a cheerful fire the cottage looked cosy enough, and Merry thought they might have fallen upon far less comfortable quarters. The site pleased him immensely—it was like being hidden away in the very heart of nature itself. "I admire your son's choice of locality for a dwelling," he said. The old mother nodded, but passed no remark. Whatever her son did was right, although she could have wished him nearer civilization.

There were no writing materials to be had. Hugh Edred had wellnigh forgotten the useful art of penmanship. Merry was therefore compelled to defer communicating with Saul Weir until he obtained his portmanteau, which they had left at Elko's best hotel. When Edred came home in the evening he promised to send over for it on the morrow, and with this satisfactory arrangement Merry was well content. The success attending his efforts put him in the best of spirits, and he enjoyed the company of that true son of nature better than he had enjoyed the society of any one for many a long day. In this world people are grim because no one takes the trouble to make them laugh. Mr Tattergast took particular trouble to make himself agreeable to Hugh Edred's mother, and caused even her to laugh, for the first time during many years, without bitterness.

Hugh Edred said little, but observed fixedly. There is science in silence, grand science; and after living alone half a life that science is understood. Hugh Edred was better versed in the voices of nature—those spoke to his soul. The fine old tones of creation re-echoed in and out the years; he often heard utterances heard in childhood—they recalled pic-

tures of his youth, and were like a sharp yet sweet reminder of the past. Memory may be a keen tyrant or most lovable companion ; but in either case it is the one thing truthful, and therefore worthy of respect. In his unfettered solitude a harp was strung between the earth and stars, only played on by his emotions. There was no rude hand to dash away the cobweb of his fancy. Among the civilized, that decoration of elegant lines, that sympathy of fragile suspension, is not allowed long to remain, and there is a very bare wall, without tracery, immense in its ugliness. Hugh Edred, Captain, Miner, was not civilized, and he thanked God for it : an out-and-out Ishmaelite, with a law of his own and a rule of infinite breadth. Leaving the civilized to their liquor-shanties, their effeminate mode of life, their grossness, their chief institutions—sham, vice, and falsehood—he came forth of it and accepted savagery, thrived, and was lordly by it.

We will look in on the cottage of Captain Hugh Edred this night we tell of. He sits smoking by the fire in a rough arm-chair of his own making. He has the boy beside him, and gazes in his healthy, handsome face with kindly interest ; it is so long since he has seen youth. Opposite sits Tattergast, recounting the search under the Cedar in Suffolk, and all connected, whereat the old woman chuckles with delight, as she sits right away in the shade ; she can see her son better there.

"We thought it would, one day, be dug for," she said—"that was why we removed it ; and many a long hour we were about it."

Merry could scarcely credit his hearing, it seemed so extraordinary that the woman could thus dispassionately explain her share in the handling of this mysterious treasure. What would he not have given to ask where it was laid ? But he felt pledged to abide by the conditions upon which his life was spared. As he went on to allude to the interior of the Heron-gate, its noble apartments, its spacious hall, broad stairs, and general household comfort, Noeba's eyes glittered ; she gasped for a moment as though in pain, and passed her withered hand across her brow. She was in the shade, and none saw ; but how it gave the lie to that insensibility with which she was

accredited! She looked back over her life: there was great joy against its pain, and much comfort beside the sorrow. And while the young man talked of that home where the greater part of it had been spent, she seemed to live it all through again. Never had the impression of the past been so strong as upon this night, when it arose clearly before her with a startling vividness. She attributed it to the conversation upon the old place; it was more likely to have been one of those mysterious forewarnings of which at times we hear.

A rude curtain hung across the window, not through fear of any one looking in, but to render the place more compact when the lamp was lighted. Logs blazed away and added to the glow; wind howled without; and as Merry shrugged his shoulders distastefully, Hugh Edred remarked, "You're glad not to be out in it. A fairish step 'tween here and Elko, but our men don't make much of it."

"Have you a strong force of constabulary about here?" asked Merry, smiling.

"I am Chief Constable, sir; and my office is very much of a sinecure."

"Not troubled with that adjunct of townships—the house-breaker?"

"I have never seen any about. We are a little too out-of-the-way, I fancy; and we have a reputation for spotting vermin which would make the visit risky." He looked carelessly in the direction of his guns, then with his hard hand stroked the boy's cheek.

"I wonder what became of my revolver?" lightly asked Tattergast.

"You will find it yonder; I brought it in with me."

"Can't you talk about something besides housebreaking and firearms?" grumbled Noeba, shivering, while the gusts of wind swept round the dwelling.

"To be sure, mother. Let's talk of England!"

"I'd like to hear you talk of Saul Weir the carpenter," she said; "nothing else has the profit o' that."

"Ay, tell us of your friend," assented Edred; "I've heard a great deal from my mother about him."

"I don't know much myself, except that he's an uncommonly good fellow, who has adapted himself to a mechanical life when he was born for something better. There are two branches of the Weir family—he's at one end, I the other; *there* you have all the worth, here all the worthlessness!"

George Herrick looked into his friend's face with reproving fondness; but the unaffected confession pleased Hugh Edred.

Thus chatting, the evening passed. Then Noeba began to weary, and did not scruple to say so. The best they had to offer by way of supper was put before their guests, and afterwards they settled as comfortably as they could for the night, the Captain having first turned down the lamp and made the fire high with piled-up logs. There was no other compartment to the Miner's ranch, therefore they had to rest Indian-fashion, in blankets on the floor.

Noeba had lain down upon the only paillasse beside the case—from old custom, from regard for the hand that made it; from some dim presentiment. Although weary, she did not sleep: lay watchful still, and saw the flickering firelight play on the face of her son, and while he slept noted its every line, as she had often done in youth. Repulsive though the old woman might be, this strong devotion was of itself redeeming.

Who would have imagined grim Tragedy brooded over that peaceful hut?

All slept but her. The wind without beat on the log-built walls, piercing the crannies: but the wood blazed bright within; she saw it glisten on the work of Saul Weir, and it was like company.

After a while the fire burnt low; she would not replenish it lest the noise awoke the sleepers. It burnt out, and only embers were left, fanned by the draughts of air; then the embers died, slowly, as though with reluctance.

The wind sounded more dolorously. She looked through a little knot-hole in one of the logs close to her, at the night without. There was no moon, there were no stars, yet the darkness was not so intense but she could tell when something passed close, between her eye and the country. She

became more accustomed to the gloom, when another shadow crossed, and she had no difficulty in detecting a cordon of human beings who surrounded the cottage. She drew her breath painfully, with instant realization of it, clutching ominously with her talon-like fingers, and rising swiftly glided to where Hugh kept his guns all ready for use. She detached one after another, quickly and with care, and laid one beside each sleeper; then awoke them, cautiously, in the darkness enjoining silence—and she heard her son's teeth meet threateningly.

All crouched by the wall farthest from the door and waited. Presently they heard the lock forced softly; this was followed by a rush of cold air, and the unerring marksman levelled his piece at the opening, taking deliberate aim. Its success was witnessed by heavy falling of a body, over which leaped several men. Then ensued fearful confusion; the Captain fired again, the flash lighted up the interior for a moment and disclosed the strength of the marauding gang, another of whom fell before his shot. It also in that moment revealed two revolvers, held by Lufkin and another, directed at the Captain's heart. Noeba discovered it quicker than her son, and she threw herself before him, receiving the full discharge in her breast, sinking upon the ground with a moaning sigh, well content to have saved his life. The Mormon's hoarse laugh of satisfaction evidenced his share in it. Tattergast fired in his direction, and the maddened Edred rushed to avenge his mother's fall. A terrific hand-to-hand encounter commenced, and the combat filled the place with a murderous din.

"Save the boy!" called Hugh Edred to Tattergast; but they could not find him or hear where he might be, and the horrid thought flashed across Tattergast's mind that he must have fallen. Edred and the Mormon fought closely with their knives. In a struggle with the Captain, it of course went against him, and he fell mortally wounded beside his prostrate abettors. Hugh Edred then turned to Tattergast's relief, for he judged he was closely pressed; they both were wounded, and lost blood with every vigorous movement. Suddenly Edred felt a swift blow from behind; the Mormon had crawled

near, and with a fiendish stroke attacked the brave Captain in the back. He stood a few minutes pursuing the effort of defending Tattergast, with some success. Their assailants were driven off, but only for a time; and the wounds made them more savage than ever. Edred kept up with a tremendous exertion, and at last sank upon the ground. Then Tattergast saw the odds were against him, the three attacking him being doubly ferocious when but one remained to quiet; their wounds also caused them to feel revengeful. He fell, severely struck on the head by the butt-end of a revolver. An awful hush succeeded the combat; even those remaining conquerors leaned gasping with affright at the startling silence. It was broken by the Mormon faintly asking the result, and they told him. He bade them feel round for the wooden case, and then prepare to remove it and himself. He cursed them for not getting a light, and declared he would procure one, concealing his real state, as he feared they would rob him of the box which had cost so much. They procured a light: all around were strewn those dead or dying; those wounded, exhausted by loss of blood, silent and ghastly. The Mormon again impatiently asked for the box. They told him it was not to be found, that it was not in the cottage; and he leaned painfully upon his elbow, looking at them with dismay, and himself scanned the floor. It was true, the case had been removed, and he sank back and died with an oath upon his lips—died of injuries inflicted by the avenging hand of Hugh Edred.

Again there was solemn quiet. Judgment seemed deliberating over the scene of the tragedy. A weird influence seized upon the men, and they spoke to one another in lowered tones, agreeing to retrace their way to Elko without delay, and without doing anything for those in the cottage—a resolution worthy of the band. They had blown out the light, and the gloom was restored. Those gusts without might have been wild spirits tearing at the logs, that not one should be left upon another. A groping sound within, a body dragged itself toilingly a little way upon the floor—it was the woman searching for her son. She could never believe him slain; nor was he—his life was saved by her last devoted act.

When she found him, she rested her poor head on his breast, while her thin hands went up to the face she thought so splendid and loved so firmly. She drew it down and kissed it, and wound her arms round him—dying thus.

He, all insensible, knew naught of it; but presently, when the door was softly opened, they were found together. It was Herrick, who at the outset had preserved his own safety and that of the case by stealing off with it through the window in the first confusion. He had hidden it, and returned to see if the fray was over, and if he could aid the sufferers. Procuring a light he went first to the side of his beloved friend, knelt there, and took the red hand in his, felt the heart, and listened for a sign of life; then heard this, "Jessie," faintly sighed with a broken kiss, while the lips painfully parted. Might be a man or a boy, might be a girl or a woman, the name was there on the lips, and that was more than Herrick had ever heard before. He did not stop to speculate on it, but set about restoring his friend to life and animation; thinking that if he did not, and quickly, the Jessie, whoever it was, would never see the curl-clustered head again. There was a sad wound to wash of its stain and matted hair, and very tenderly did Herrick perform that office; and with such gentle usage Jessie would have felt satisfied, could she have seen him supporting the head and bathing the temples. He placed water to the pallid lips of his friend, and caused him to drink a little. After an interval he revived, and a tiny piece of colour appeared on either cheek: soon his eyes opened upon the glad boy, and he spoke his name.

Seeing his friend coming round satisfactorily, Herrick turned attention next to Hugh Edred. That stalwart worthy was more badly wounded, and the boy felt sick and faint when he discovered the state of the case; but he set to work, removed the Captain's rough outer gear, and stanchd the blood so far as he was able. It was a more obstinate and thoroughly difficult matter of recovery. Edred was of full habit, and weakened by great loss; and for a time the young surgeon feared his efforts would be unavailing. He had no lint or appliance of any sort, save his own wearing apparel, which

was of different kind to that worn by the Miner. He tore it up without hesitation, formed a stout pad with the linen, and so closed up the wound. His only instructor here was common-sense, which as usual was in the right. No main artery was wounded, fortunately; the hæmorrhage was venous, but would yield to rest and care. The boy placed his patient in the most comfortable position he could arrange, and then proceeded with the thoughtful, solemn, office of removing the dead—in order that the living should not be shocked by the scene of horror around. It was a sad, repulsive duty; but he persevered with it, dragging the bodies to an outhouse at the back, where Edred kept his wood and tools. Hugh Edred's mother, the boy placed with beautiful reverence apart, covering the body with a blanket. It was now broad daylight: he set the place straight, and lighted a fire. Thus when Merry recovered consciousness, the sun was shining, the cottage looked as it was wont, and but for a feeling of weakness and the vivid impression of a boisterous nightmare, he would have had little knowledge of what had occurred. Anon it dawned painfully upon him, and with an uneasy sense of encountering some distressing appearance, he turned his head slowly. Slight as the action was, Herrick noticed it, and was by his side instantly.

"I am glad to see *you*, dear Herrick!" Making an effort to press the boy's hand.

"There has been some sharp practice, Mr Weir; but we are through it, and I contrived to secure the wooden case for you."

This was important and encouraging news; a grateful smile played on the young man's lips.

"And now, do not talk; remain quiet, and you will soon feel stronger."

Hugh Edred was heard stirring, the talking worried him. "The Mormon," he asked, impatiently, "the cursed Mormon, is he dead?" Raising himself.

"He is, sir; quite dead."

Edred sank back groaning, but with relief.

He still moved restlessly, troubled by another thought. "My mother" he asked, very anxiously. The boy knelt by

him, and answered in a low tone, "She is sleeping." He would communicate the full truth when her son was better able to hear it.

"Is that the Englishman?" asked Edred again.

"It is," answered the Englishman for himself—"all that is left of him."

"I fear you have fared badly?" With blunt solicitude.

"I never want to come and see you any more; I don't like your neighbours."

Herrick again begged them not to talk, and there was a pause of long duration; he hoped they slept.

He occupied himself in preparing nourishment, to be available when they were more restored.

Two hours passed; the sufferers' repose was fitful and unequal, and the boy felt very anxious.

He heard a horseman riding along the hard road stop at the cottage, and call, "Anybody there?"

Herrick hurriedly opened the door. It was a messenger with a telegram addressed to "Mr Weir, at Hugh Edred's, Elko, Nevada," and it was from England.

He paid the man the charge, and entering the cottage closed the door again softly. "Perhaps there's some good news here!" he thought, smiling to himself, pleased at the idea. And much it seemed needed, for his friend tossed, agitated, wrestling with some care greater than his wounds. Once more he heard him murmur painfully concerning "Jessie."

Another hour, then he awoke in great pain. Herrick went to him with earnest anxiety. "I don't know whether I ought to give you this now," he said, hesitating, holding the telegram in his hand; "but it may, perhaps, do good!"

Surprised, Merry took it from him, and tore the envelope; and a change passed over the face—its pain vanishing before the glad and joyous light there radiated.

"Yes," he murmured, happily; "it will do good." Closing his eyes the better to realise its three magical words, so fraught with fine meaning for him:—

Jessie is found.

CHAPTER X.

DIVISION IN THE HOUSE OF TOMKINS.

THE inquiry sitting upon the conduct of Mr Noah Tomkins had finished its labour. That solemn mouthpiece of equity, the family solicitor, pronounced upon it, viewed in the light of their stringent compact. The third brother (no longer to be termed the irreproachable, but rather the old black goat of the brotherhood), was an outlaw and a reprobate in the opinion of the moral elders. No disseverance would, however, follow — because Death or Matrimony alone were inserted as clauses for dissolution of the partnership when they united in one model establishment. In the event of either of those extraordinary fatalities occurring, the property of the sufferer would be confiscated.

Upon Mr Adam seeing that his brother Noah was not greatly the worse for his escapade, he himself ventured to look more fixedly at Ada Sylvester, when he met that pretty girl out with her string of young Lillingstons. Some corrupt temptation was evidently pulling at his probity; and noticing that Adam was restive, Seth mentioned it to Noah. They agreed to follow him in some of his little walks. This led to their being unseen witnesses of one of his meetings with Miss Sylvester, and Brothers Seth and Noah looked grave, very grave.

"If this should lead to a marriage, brother," said Seth, as they walked home, "it will almost condone your own indiscretion; and Adam was a little severe upon you."

Mr Noah knew his tack, and said, "I don't pretend to be so particular as yourself and Brother Adam. I fancy the Scriptures are opposed to an ascetic spirit?"

"I confess to being scrupulous. Principle is at the bottom of it."

"I cannot imitate you. This afternoon I am going for a drive with a widow friend, a most proper person, and strictly decorous. We contemplate organizing a soup-kitchen for destitute Suffolk labourers, and prefer to conduct our interviews publicly—there is so much in that, dear brother."

"I should perish beneath the blighting breath of calumny," said Seth, and they gravely shook hands over it.

That afternoon, when Noah went out, he called at a cottage a little way on, and closing the door, began to talk with the woman upon subjects of a philanthropic order, taking care to stand so that he could see through the window out upon the road. As he expected, he had not been there long when Brother Seth stepped lightly past, and the spring at the heel was so volatile it confirmed Mr Noah's suspicion of mischief. After giving him time to get well on ahead, Noah took pastoral leave of the woman and followed in the track of Seth.

Noah considered Adam as good as provided for, and he had put an idea into Seth's head if it had never been there before. Noah would not only have felt particular pleasure in acquiring their combined wealth, but also in turning the tables; for he had been acutely annoyed at the sharp practice on the occurrence of his own frail conduct.

Great was his astonishment when Seth turned down a by-lane and joined a young person whom Noah recognized as the pretty housemaid of the Herongate. He was himself highly interested in this belle-of-the-kitchen, and felt greatly displeased at Brother Seth's want of honesty. She had evidently been waiting for him, and it was plain dear Brother Seth had not wanted coaching. Impossible to know how many such interviews had taken place. Noah hurriedly said to himself, "I'll go and fetch that good soul Adam, for this is really very serious."

It exposed perfidy when at the Herongate; for he must have made her acquaintance there, and Noah could have sworn the girl looked only at himself.

There was some danger of Seth in his turn falling a victim

to innuendo, for the meeting was chiefly to gain information respecting the site of the Treasure.

His informant was telling the latest that had transpired, with considerable animation, when Noah came round circuitously and, with Adam, witnessed from a distance. And really they thought the girl's conduct was marked by considerable freedom.

Although it appeared a long interview, she had a yarn of more than the average length to unravel. Then Seth took out his purse and placed a piece of money in her hand, whereat her face shone radiant. The next act of this remarkably serious programme took the watchers aback; and Mr Adam, staggering, was supported by Mr Noah. Their Brother Seth was seen to put his arm round Miss Housemaid's waist and give her a kiss with much agility. It was not to be expected the others could stand that. They burst upon the guilty pair like an avalanche of purity. But then Noah was so overcome by the wickedly sly glance bent upon him by the girl he quite lost his self-control, and exclaiming, "Hang it all, what's good for Seth is good for me!" he repeated Brother Seth's grave misdemeanour. This was so shocking, Adam staggered again, this time against the girl, who inclined her head with pretty solicitude, and he was caught in the toils also.

Then the Brothers Tomkins looked at one another.

They felt very jeopardized. It was necessary that something should be done to prevent a fall, and as Seth was the original sinner, Adam and Noah linked arms after the old design, with Seth in the middle, and made their way through the brambles with superb determination. Not once did they cast a glance back at the temptress, nor permit their erring brother to do so.

"If this discreditable encounter is heard of, Brothers, we shall become the victims of slander." As Mr Adam said this the others shuddered.

"It was strictly private until you intruded upon it," said Seth, irritably.

"Exactly," replied his elder, dryly; "we look after one another to forestall scandal. Strictly private interviews are

indiscreet—it was an impropriety in this case. And, brother, you had sullied that young creature's lips, until Noah and myself administered brotherly unction."

Still Seth did not wear by any means a pleasant expression, and it found vent when he said shortly, "I could not have been capable of serving yourself and Miss Sylvester a trick of the kind."

This piqued Adam terribly. He was much displeased, and for the remainder of the walk the Brothers Tomkins proceeded unarmed. It might have been surmised from their peculiar elasticity, and the way in which they seemed to recoil from the gross earth, that something unusual had occurred to wound their sense of propriety.

One of the rooms at their residence used to be spoken of as "the office" amongst themselves. The designation was a remnant of old times, and it gratified them to use the word. Within were three desks, at which they would sit on three stools, and there they did some wonderful figuring; and they were never so happy as when at it. The pepper-and-salt-coloured maids were never admitted to the bureau; when any dusting or dirty work was to be done, it, as usual, fell to Noah. Light came in dim and dingily, which they thought the proper office tinge; air was close and unwholesome, which they held the proper office sort. The place smelt of figures, and looked of figures; they seemed floating instead of motes in the beam of yellow light, and whisking up against the misty glass in place of flies: these were scared by an old file of bills hanging on the ceiling for a catcher, and never entered. There was a legend of a gnat which dared the eldest Tomkins's nose, but it was slain by Mr Adam without the loss of one unnecessary minute.

In this sanctum the shades of old business revelled, and the Brothers liked to feel for the time, and all unknown to the world, thorough-going men of commerce. Their fingers tingled when they grasped hard upon the pens and drove a pushing trade, smashing competition and shutting up the small concerns. Feet would spring on the bars of their stools at any particular stroke of business. Faces robbed of every

vestige of their smug beneficence came out hard and mercenary. Each desk had the wall to itself, and the demure Tomkins there calculating would look over his shoulder at the others hard at it, and chuckle at the balance he fancied himself in account with, some day.

They would march to the office in line—Adam first, Noah last—carrying the tradesmen's books and bills. Take their seats heavily, like three dreary clerks with small salary and large encumbrance. And it is here we find them the morning after the incidents described. Seth is nibbling at his quill. When a Tomkins nibbled, some uncommon bait was at the end of the line.

"Brother Adam," said Seth, in a soft, insinuating office-tone.

Brother Adam turned a little on his stool, darting a cross-eyed look of inquiry at his junior. Brother Noah also looked up—it was unusual to talk during office-hours.

"I should like to say a word about that affair of yesterday."

"Not *here*, brother;" as though to complain would sully that place.

"Yes, Adam, *here*," said Seth, firmly; "what I have to say relates to the *Saul Weir Treasure*."

The other two spun round on their stools like teetotums and stared hard at Seth. The meeting was assuming a very different complexion. They did not feel in the least avaricious, but would very much like to know something more concerning that colossal hoard of which they had believed themselves the sole custodians.

"Well, you see, it struck me that girl might be useful. Nobody would deny she was pretty, everybody would suppose she was vain. I complimented her; asked her to run over now and then and let me know how she was getting on, and tell me all the news. I have met her once before; I learnt then that nothing was found by the Cedar—the place of deposit has been shifted in modern times, and the only person acquainted with it they imagine to be an old woman who lived there at the time, and possibly helped in its removal."

"Impossible for that woman to have been a Christian," said Mr Adam, with concern.

"Probably not. To continue: yesterday I learnt something else." The two Brothers Tomkins craned their necks in impatience to hear what it was. "That this old woman is in America; that one of the heirs has gone out to her; and that Cobham Masheter is defraying the cost of the investigation."

"Brother Seth," said Mr Adam, calmly, "I have long felt that it is due to our social position to see America before we die. Its political economy, its broad religious system, its promise of holding out a *percentage* on expenses, and our earnest desire to know this dear young man, alone and possibly without friends in a strange land, should influence us, even at the cost of private feelings, to proceed direct. We may meet with him, our guiding counsel may be beneficial—I think it well to go."

"As for me," said Seth, "I am not long for this world. It is disappointing. I shall be ~~glad~~ to see another."

"We will let our house. Brother Noah will look after all the little necessities, and we will see what can be done for the improvement of America. The New Testaments can go in the valise, Noah—we shall then feel safer. I think, brothers, if you please, we will now to prayers."

With suave hypocrisy each came off his stool, met in the middle, and affectionately pressed each other's hands. Then with business-like despatch they went out in line—Adam first, Noah last—and presented an eminently devout exterior before the pepper-and-salt domestics.

CHAPTER XI

UPON AN ORGAN.

DAISY busied herself to make the place unusually nice by the time Saul returned from Liverpool; and when she had done all that was possible, she went up-stairs to a window to watch for his coming. It was snowing in London also, and few people were passing along Essex Road. Those who had leisure and means had flocked to the various places of amusement. She gazed out upon the street eagerly; she knew she would recognise him such a long way off, for to her no one ever walked as he did.

After some time Daisy saw a cab. The horse trotted almost noiselessly over the snow. This caused her to think of another cab that once drove up to that door with its sad burden; then the vehicle she was watching also stopped at the shop, and she thought it strange, for Saul always walked. The girl ran down-stairs, and, in reply to the cabman's ring, opened the door. Daisy was much surprised to see her friend engaged in assisting, with marked attentiveness, a young lady to alight. By the aid of the gas-lamps, Daisy saw how young and pretty she was, and the child felt slightly hurt; she did not exactly know why, but she experienced a wounded impression. After she had waited so patiently all day, and looked so eagerly for his coming, when he did come with that unexpected companion, it thrilled her with surprise and almost with disappointment.

"Here is Miss Jessie, Daisy!" That explained everything. The little girl knew of Saul's hitherto unsuccessful search for her; and now that she was found, Daisy gave her a glad welcome, and looked at her with gentle interest—for from all

Saul had confided to her, Jessie assumed a heroine's place in this little girl's estimation. She took her up-stairs, helped to remove her travelling apparel, and then ran down to reach another cup and saucer and make some toast. Jessie had no cause to doubt her new friends' joy at having discovered and rescued her: they manifested it in every way. Profound gratitude was the prevailing feeling in her heart; and before going down-stairs, she knelt, and in prayer thanked the Father of all good for the signal way in which He had watched over her. The uplifted eyes seemed in their rapt spiritual gaze to pierce the heavens and discover that darling mother who had so lovingly cared for her, so often troubled because of the perils and sorrows to which her delicate child might be exposed. The still small voice heard in our softer moods was very present with Jessie. Her mother had known the lurid mystery of agony, and the girl derived from her the capacity for suffering. There is suffering upon the surface, and suffering to the very dregs; only great souls suffer fully. She wondered, would her changing life some day bring peace. The mysterious fascination attracting her steps to Meadowford! Was it the desire to throw herself upon the protection of that august lady, or the irrepressible longing to know something more of the girl with whom her lover had been entranced? She thought of him with unutterable love, and saw again in imagination those chilly waters, that cold beyond: but who could discern the perils possibly to environ his path, or realize his sorrowful uncertainty about herself?

Jessie went down-stairs to the cosy little room where smiling faces, a large fire in full blaze, a comfortable arm-chair, and an inviting tea awaited her appearance,—books, and that dainty pair (which Southey has declared alone perfectly furnishes a house), a child and a kitten. The tears started to her eyes, the change from late experiences was so complete. Seated in the easy-chair by the fire, a small table made by her host drawn up beside it, Jessie partook of tea, while the little girl, just in her element, waited upon her attentively.

In the evening they tried to amuse her with pictures and

soothe her with music. Saul had made for himself an organ—it was plain, and there was no guilt about it, but surprisingly sweet strains proceeded from its pipes. He had taught himself to play, and excellent was the result. And Jessie, who loved sacred music with the devotion those do who hear as little of it as she had done, leaned back in her cosy corner, wrapped in an ecstasy of calm pleasure. She placed her lover-friend before her eyes, and thought of the little home she had so often pictured. Ah! would he come back the same? What could be the real meaning of his agitation when Meadowford was mentioned? And there stole forward, out of the distance of days, the sweetest young face she had ever looked upon. It came vividly until side by side with his, and the flowers they both loved seemed to surround them, Merry and the gentle florist. Garlands tried to bind them, a sea of blossom was about them, and their path was strewn with flowers. Then Jessie thought that, however unhappy she might be, she yet loved him too well to interpose; her hand should not sweep aside the flowers, nor break the garlands encircling them. That girl was all too fair, too like a flower herself, to be blighted; better the heart that had known sorrow from its youth upward should continue to know it than that another should be stricken. Daisy noticed that the plaintive, solemn music made Jessie look sad—the pleasure upon her countenance had been but transitory, and exquisite melancholy succeeded it—and the little girl asked Saul to play something more cheerful. He guessed the cause of the request. Majestic harmony took the place of the solemn strains, and the ennobling cheerfulness roused her. She seemed to picture that high-born lady, waiting but to stoop from her lofty station to love this poor little mortal; ready in that exile to show the gracious tenderness it had been her pleasure to display when enjoying a magnificence of sovereignty.

As the child stood by the man at the organ, and seemed to watch his every movement with rapt intentness, Jessie thought there was something grave and almost sacred about it. More deep meaning dwelt in the simplicity of that friendship and the consecration of that leisure than many would fathom.

Her mind was all attune to reverence and quiet, calm thought, and she could appreciate it at its best. The tenderness of music is always made more musical by sympathy: and the gentleness of this idealism was rendered higher by her sensibility. The child's eyes looked into his as though she would there discern the reflection of that harmony of a better life he always looked upon. The man's nature seemed to redeem a whole age of its languor of character: it contrasted vigorously with that of Merry, so light and careless of the morrow and the present. All about were evidences of his skill, his taste, and industry. The mind was not stronger than the strong right hand: and they form the master-powers of the world.

Among the shapes in clay, rough, rugged, or finished upon the potter's wheel, this man, Saul Weir, stands statue-like in unwrought thoroughness.

That day when Mr Weir returned from the Treasure expedition (in reply to Daisy's question concerning what had kept him so long), he remarked, "Some people have been looking for money, and I have been helping them." She thought the answer strange, but not being inquisitive, left it. If he wished to tell her more he would do so. He did; and told her, "It is the old Treasure poor Archie found, and, fortunately for us, it exists only upon paper."

Daisy also felt glad. Any accession of wealth might spoil their charming evenings—golden indeed, and not to be improved upon in value. Thus the Treasure disappointment did not affect Mr Weir's health or his temper. On the contrary, he felt honestly relieved at the result. Shakespeare has set it down, "The robb'd that smiles steals something from the thief." Assuredly if the shrewd hand that removed the Treasure of Boadicea but knew of this heir's unalloyed contentment it would lose its cunning. The man was richer than a monarch. From boyhood never a deed for which to feel one pang; all manhood, not a thought but dignified the manhood. A rare example of true worth, and natural to the backbone: no mock paragon or tinselled hero: an ordinary English workman, wishful to elevate himself, not in the social scale by some old dead queen's blurred gold, but in the arena

of thought, by some live intelligence, and a trained, well-balanced mind. This is the story of one man at least who never bends the knee to gold, whose soul is large although his station is but a lowly one,—an idyl of the dignity of labour with the growth of a human mind.

Saul was always ready to aid the helpless at the cost of himself. Sacrifice for another is a solitary magnificence so splendid, its radiance serves to light up a selfish world, and make it fair in the eyes of the angels. His worth rests on a basis of religion, honour, and common-sense. The first of these is the vitality of life itself; without it all other things are dead. He was so aloof, he sometimes seemed to stand upon a rock, isolated, while around surged and swept the motley crowd to its bourne of nothingness; stretching a hand forth to lift one and another who could gain no grasp or footing, and dragged him down with their weight of woe.

His character seemed to assimilate with the sonorous grandeur of the organ.

Somehow, while she dreamily heard his music on that primitive instrument made by his hand, saw the profile roughly handsome, and felt the influence of a great and noble nature, the impressive simplicity of it all made her think of him as more like one of those plain, grand souls we read of when the world was young. She could rest, watching him as she could have watched no other man. She seemed to be studying child-like faith and devotion. A self-taught player on a self-made instrument praising God with tune! There was something ruggedly, conqueringly supreme about this—it was a fine side-light of a massive mind regulated to tenderness. His brow held beauty like a glory—that beauty of spirit which is to the reflective brow of thought its crown and thought-surpassing charm. His music indicated his character: in the fight with the mean and base and ignoble, his buckler was faith in God; no truce, but a kind left hand for lifting the wounded with a more than womanly tenderness. His life was one sumptuous utterance, full of music which is feeling, full of feeling which is music; scholarly, thoughtful, intense: living a double life. And how happy! His life was continual happi-

ness. There were no brooding cares, no worries, no sorrows even, because he smoothed them all away. To live was to enjoy delight, because he had never spoilt his life. To die would have been as enjoyable, because he had done nothing to lead him to fear death, and was not attached to life upon principles of animalism.

No two natures could have understood one another better than did Saul and Jessie, although neither disclosed that knowledge—could not have done so indeed, for

“Thought is deeper than all speech ;
Feeling deeper than all thought ;
Souls to souls can never teach
What unto themselves was taught.”

A man who so perfectly *lived* this life, even as it was intended to be lived ; without a single care for the morrow, in complete enjoyment of the pure act of living, and the happiest possible gratification with the duties life involves : such a being—so unlike to the worn-down, harassed race—forcibly impressed Jessie, to the point of esteem, if not of admiration.

No cloud upon his brow ever—unless when sorrowing for another ; no discontent with anything ; no grumbling at fortune, no repining at fate, no longing for wealth ; no ill-will borne to a soul ; no thought contrary to the most matchless purity,—a real true man. Making his soul wise in the hours he gave to his books ! What progress he had made ! And something practical had come of it, in one direction ; he turned from his music with a pleasant smile,—“To-morrow, Miss Jessie, we will run down into Essex !” The thought seemed grandly woven with the imposing strains upon the organ.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE ALCHEMIST TOOK HIS MYSTERIOUS RITES
TO A CAVE.

THE proposal to visit Essex was acted upon, and Mr Weir made his first acquaintance with Meadowford. There was scarcely enough activity stirring to prepossess him, but he had no doubt that for those who liked a calm style of carrying on business it was a very nice town indeed; and its excessive cleanliness and airiness commended the place to him. The country around, although seen under a wintry aspect, also pleased him; Saul was an intense lover of the country.

Noticing quickly that Jessie was moved upon thus returning to the place, he made haste to pass through it, and a brisk walk brought them to the Hermitage. The pretty villa-cottage took his fancy; and when to his summons a genteel servant and the ladylike Mrs Pomfret appeared, he felt comfortably satisfied with the complexion of things so far. But Mrs Pomfret, however respectable-looking a workman might be, could not hear of his seeing her mistress. Some worthy mechanic from the town, doubtless, wishing to put a glass-house up for the preservation of their beautiful flowers, having heard of Madame's passion for exotics; or, possibly, some good Catholic desirous of getting his well-trained daughter into Madame's service: any way, the direct interview with the lady, respectfully yet rather audaciously asked, as she thought, could not on any account be granted. The workman most pressingly assured the housekeeper of the importance of his wish to see Madame de Gonsalvo: he had come from London on purpose, and begged the favour of a few minutes'

conversation. London represented nothing but confusion to Mrs Pomfret, who was a quiet person, and no importance was of any weight where her mistress's privacy was concerned; so she very civilly, yet very firmly, assured Mr Weir that any communication must proceed through herself. Thus disconcerted, Saul bethought him of the bracelet, and said a word or two aside to his companion. She immediately handed it to Mrs Pomfret, saying, "Will you kindly take this to the lady? I think she will then sanction our admission to her presence." Mrs Pomfret knew the ornament by sight, and felt surprise upon seeing it in those hands: the aspect of matters was altered, and with a gentle inclination of the head she complied—returning quickly to say that her Highness desired they should be shown to the drawing-room. No one was in that elegant apartment when they entered: a luxuriously-cushioned sofa drawn up to the fire, and a foreign newspaper open upon a table close to it, indicated the room had not long been vacated.

Refined taste was apparent on all sides, without any approach to royal splendour: art, in needlework, sculpture, and painting, by that royal hand, however, shed an atmosphere of splendid embellishment. Upon the table were Sanchez's '*Poesias Anteriores*,' Pedro Lopez de Ayala's '*El Rimado de Palacio*,' Don Juan Manuel's '*Conde Lucanor*,' and other Spanish classics. A portfolio of designs to the Cid, the delicate handiwork of the Princess; pencil sketches; views from the windy plains of the Castiles to the sea-board; glimpses of the Asturias and Galicia, and regions bordering on the Atlantic; the imposing mountain districts and dreary flats of the vast land,—all betrayed how it was loved to its most rugged or most barren point. And there was picturing of the peoples, taciturn, wild, stubborn, rendered faithfully by a hand that had failed to govern firmly, if lovingly; Basques, Gitanos, Patones, Maragatos, and the romantic races making *Las Españas* the most picturesque provinces upon the Continent. Scarlet jackets and sashes of the peasantry, the green or yellow saya, the purple gorro of the Catalan; the characteristic fan, mantilla, and capa; the velvet sombrero, with brim



turned up coquettishly; the zamarra of lambskin; the Moorish faja, scarlet with bars of blue, yellow, and white; the gaiters of yellow leather,—all were glowingly coloured and fascinating as the land. And what a marked contrast was seen in that stately lady entering with noiseless and majestic movement, in a robe of sable velvet arranged in the richest folds, and entirely without ornament! Her hair, unlike that of her nation's ladies, was of a softened radiance, as though its golden hue had become toned to brown for lack of sun in our colder land; and the plain, simple arrangement of it was more effective than any diadem. The Princess advanced with gracious affability, greatly pleased to see the girl again, and extended her hand with frank sincerity, while gracefully inclining her head to Saul, who was neither bewildered nor embarrassed, and who, if he did not acknowledge the courtesy like a courtier, did so like a man—Jessie meantime bowing her pretty face over that still more pretty hand.

Mrs Pomfret, who followed behind the lady, softly closed the door, and placed chairs.

"Pray, be seated, dear child; and you, sir," said the Princess, graciously, taking her place upon the sofa and motioning Jessie to approach nearer to her than she was about to do. "I think it so kind of you to come and see me again. I have often thought of our mutual understanding that you were to do so if ever needing a home and a friend."

Mrs Pomfret, with the good manners distinguishing her, looked for permission to withdraw, which was lightly accorded, and she retired, feeling a degree wounded that her revered mistress had never confided this caprice. Really it was so dear to the Princess that, precious as was Pomfret to her, she could not bring the matter forth to gossip over.

When they were alone Jessie went to the Princess and, kneeling at her feet, avowed she had come for both. This confiding attachment and memory of herself so charmed the royal lady, she raised that tremulous suppliant and kissed her upon the forehead. Saul thought the actions of this lady were singularly noble, and felt rejoiced on Jessie's behalf that such august protection was open to her.

"I fancied somehow you would come to me one day; and now we will endeavour to make your life as happy as it has ever been. You, sir, I thank sincerely for your part in this!"

"A double part, my lady; not played with sinister design." She looked up at the quick-witted reply, and her eyes met his. She had not seen such eyes in Spain. Her silence gave him permission to speak further. "I brought this young lady by her own strong desire, although opposed to my own regretful wishes."

"Our dramatist Calderon has said, sir, that the best counsel is that of woman;" and, with a proud smile, Princess Zenaïde approvingly patted the soft hair of the girl she had taken beside her.

"I find the dramatists say things more for effect than truth, my lady." This sturdy speech was so unlike those she had been accustomed to hear, that her Highness looked at the speaker in some embarrassment. She was very apprehensive of rudeness always, and did not know but that this held a savour of anarchism. He improved upon it. "The Spanish dramatists especially seem to partake of the suave unreality natural to the people." The Princess looked as though she were repeating a brief prayer. If not hurt she was terribly shocked. To hear her people traduced when she could not defend them caused tears to spring to her fine eyes. She brushed them lightly away, and attempting to smile, observed, "You are severe upon our people, sir."

"Could I be other, lady, when they used you so shamefully, and while they harbour amongst them knaves of the Antoine Gaspard order?"

When the Princess heard this passionate, indignant speech, if immeasurably astonished, she yet felt restored confidence in the speaker: he even assumed the proportions of a champion and righter of wrong.

"You knew M. Gaspard?" she inquired, calmly.

"No, thank God. Among the villains who have crossed my path that chiefest of them all is not yet numbered!" This merciless censure of her adviser wounded the gracious

lady. Mr Weir never kept people in suspense if he could help it. With the paper bearing the emblazoned arms, the royal seal, and signature ZENAÏDE, in his hands, he explained with quiet earnestness the meaning of his accusation. "Valuable title-deeds relating to the royal estates, and immediately concerning your Highness, were thrown, I imagine, from the condition of the box in which they were found, into the Thames. The appended date shows the conveyance to be recent. The wording of this document implicates your adviser, M. Gaspard, who appears to have fraudulently and systematically deceived you after your departure from Spain. He is converting your private revenue to his own use, and enjoying the proceeds of your royal estate. I have pleasure in restoring the papers to your Highness, and I hope they may be the means of recovering a portion of the wealth that will befit both your station and your goodness."

This manly address, without a sparkle of the servile, with all the important significance attached, thrilled the Princess, who, rising and standing at her most queenly height, warmly acknowledged it. "Now, upon the Cross, we thank you, sir, for this most timely service! For my son, more than for myself." Glancing her eye hastily, yet searchingly, over the papers,—“I see that you have formed the only legitimate conclusions you could have come to from their perusal. The perfidy of my treacherous friend is established; but, alas! without means we can neither proceed with his righteous punishment nor the retrieving of this injury to our fortunes. We are aliens and unloved in Spain, save by a few staunch hearts whose power is not equal to their devotion. May I ask if you are a Minister of Police?”

“No, madam. I am by trade a carpenter, by birth a gentleman.”

“I am sure of it,” giving him her hand with simplicity, yet in all sad majesty, adding, in a voice of deep emotion, “*Dios lo te pagará.*”

Could her cigarette-smoking, guitar-twanging subjects have seen this noble lady in exile, their pitiful allegiance would have re-lived.

"My son is out walking, or he would thank you in person. We shall do what little can be done. I, as you know, may not set foot upon the soil of Spain. I am banished as dishonourably as though the outlawed sovereign of contrabandistas, instead of a Christian province. There is not a corregidor who would try my cause, and I have no redress even against private traitors. By the Virgin's help I shall live to see the Prince return—I ask no more. We are happy because united; for the first era in my life I have known contentment—my son's love is so sweet I can leave all else; past fortunes and present hopes are in God's hands. *No ay memoria à quien el tiempo no acabe, ni dolor que muerte no le consuma.* But I experience regret that it is not in my power to bestow upon you any souvenir of my regard and gratitude, especially for having brought this dear child to console my loneliness and seclusion." She gave her hand to Jessie and left it in hers, with so tender and so womanly an air, Saul understood the deep joy it gave her. There was no need for his remaining longer—he never dilly-dallied time away; therefore, taking respectful adieu of both, he departed.

He would not sadden Jessie by mentioning it, but he intended proceeding upon the road so far as Ipswich, to call upon Mr Masheter, and acquaint him with Merry's proceedings up to the point of departure from Liverpool. That gentleman and his daughter had returned from a few days' sojourn at Bournemouth, the state of Miss Masheter's health having necessitated an earlier return than was contemplated. This was a great grief, the drives around Bournemouth being among the favourites with Mary Masheter, so far as England was concerned. Those balmy, soft-feeling carriage-ways of the New Forest, the poetical associations of Wimborne Minster, and the bolder, more exciting beauty of Boscombe Chine, and Hengistbury Head, held unrivalled attractions for this thoughtful invalid. But who can enjoy scenery and change without health? She disguised the state of her feelings as long as possible, so as not to spoil her father's pleasure; then it came to that point when one longs for home, and believes one will be better there. When at home, Mary thought she could never

leave it again. Mrs Steele was assiduous in devoted attention ; no one could pretend more and feel less. The invalid, of a strongly grateful nature, felt agreeably satisfied with her companion, and was so thankful for each little service rendered, it would have touched any heart not of steel or stone. And this exemplary person observed the reappearance of Saul Weir with keen uneasiness. She had quite enough to compete with in the singular freak of the eminent geologist (who had adopted a device of extraordinary boldness), without having the heir re-enter the arena.

Oliver Redland had taken possession of the old sandy cave of a hill contiguous, at the northern end of the boundaries of the estate. From time immemorial this place had borne an evil reputation, and no man or woman would have sheltered therein from a shower of rain to save the best bib and tucker. Woodmen toiling under great faggots forgot their weight just there, and plodded quickly on. Darby and Joan, jogging home from market after selling the eggs, gave their old pony the whip just at that part, and it was always a clear trot while skirting the hill. Even Hodge, developed into that shining night-light the Suffolk poacher, wouldn't have buried his hares in the sand of that cave. Sturdy Giles, going home to the farm with his team off the fallow-land, took care to put the horses that side, and did not crack his whip until far beyond hearing of the cave. Why, that lever-force Love failed to raise the retreat from the dread atmosphere of superstition ; and neither Colin nor Phoebe dared go a-courting in that old red niche. Imagine, therefore, the consternation on the country-side when the blacksmith, who knew pretty well what a fire natural to this earth was like, told of horrid blue flame he had seen from the distance lighting up the cave, and causing the opposite trees, bare and leafless, to stand out like huge skeletons. It was considered very serious, and was set down to Goody Durdles, who was always a little peculiar, and read books ; and the children shuddered, for some of them had to go round that way to school. It is natural under such circumstances, when the devil may be about, and nobody have the courage to snare him, that all the weird traditions of the

past should be raked up, and provide grave subject-matter for discourse. There were the stock murder and the white-bearded hermit, smugglers, a most awful wizard, and a witch with one eye in the middle of her forehead! But everybody agreed that all the old histories, black as they were, could not be mentioned in the same breath with this direful modern occurrence.

Now it all came about very naturally, and without any blue fire, save that from the crucibles. In the course of his scientific rambling, Oliver Redland's steps were directed to this cave. He felt a presentiment beforehand of approaching that which would materially affect his prospects; and when he saw the red-dim hollow, concealing mysterious shadows and arching doubtless buried treasures, he felt a thrill of impassioned triumph, and breathlessly murmured, "At last!" It was not only feasible but certain, that the strange sounds and sights noticed from time to time for centuries past had been caused by the depositors of treasure, or those resorting thither to gaze upon the wondrous hoard. It was as clear to him as though he had assisted in its concealment; and his agitation was so pronounced, when asking the Squire's assent to his occupying the cave for a time to advance his geological researches, that Mr Masheter, with feeling and compassion, laid a hand upon his shoulder, while gently remonstrating with him. "My good friend, you will wear yourself out by this pursuit. At your age things should be taken very quietly; and here you are as full of ardour as you were forty years ago!"

"The flame of that devotion which has science for its fuel never grows low, rather finer with age and fiercer with time!" He gave practical testimony to it, standing wringing his hands in that agitated absence of mind, trembling while his poor weak body was racked all to pieces with the intensity of impatience. Mr Masheter had a high regard for men of science, thought they were the benefactors of the world, but felt glad all the same in his quiet way that he never followed it himself. On the score of humanity he was disposed to object to the tenancy proposed; but Mr Redland was so persistent, that he unwillingly complied. He did not want the old cave for

his own use, and it was practically valueless to the estate; so Redland could do what he pleased there since thus willed, but he felt sorry for him nevertheless. The philosopher wanted nobody's sorrow, and so long as he had nobody's interference, would be all right. He sent to London for such of his boxes of chemicals and instruments, vessels and apparatus, as he did not bring with him, and he persuaded Mr Masheter to lend him a heavy red curtain to hang at the entrance for keeping the wind out at night. Busily digging, on the third night the corner of the curtain was raised a little way, unseen by the absorbed toiler. A painfully black-and-white face discovered operations, and it was distorted with rage. Foiled, baffled, and now perhaps conquered, this velvet-pawed, night-preying schemer saw herself thwarted by this miserable old man, whose wizened form she could shrivel in her hand like sear foliage; and the next day arrived the heir, to make disaster more complete.

Mr Masheter was very pleased to see him, and thought his visit an obliging act of courtesy. They had a long talk. Saul felt deeply grieved to find Mr Masheter in such distress upon his daughter's account; and when he described to his honest visitor the shameful hoax attempted by Crick upon Miss Masheter's health, Saul's indignation knew no bounds, and he thought it emphatically the worst of those impositions he had circumvented. But with the thoughtfulness Mr Masheter so much liked in him, he reflected, and said, "This impostor's conduct does not injure the cause of electricity, which I have known exceedingly beneficial in spinal malady. Among my books are one or two upon this treatment, and I will look into them and let you know what I think of it."

By Mary's wish, her father admitted Mr Weir to her bijou apartment, where the three talked with sympathy of Merry and his arduous undertaking; and Saul learnt more of the exquisite character of Mary Masheter, and truly thought that, among those grown to womanhood, he had never seen one who interested him more. The gentle susceptibility, the refinement, never so apparent as in invalids, the soft shadow of spiritual peace, and that supreme grace, intellectuality

—all alike impressed him; and so interested was he, that it seemed improper to disguise his uneasiness about Mrs Steele, and this time he took care the subject was not turned off. "She has a morbid depth to her nature," he said, "calculated to exercise an unhealthy influence upon Miss Masheter, who needs cheerful and enlivening society. I am sorry to feel prejudice, but my antipathy to the woman was so marked upon first seeing her, and has so increased, I feel it a duty to mention it."

"I experienced precisely the same feeling," Mr Masheter concurred. "You must really allow me, my dear, to ask Mrs Steele, in the kindest manner possible, to provide herself with another home. There need be no unpleasantness. I will, if you wish it, pay her six months' salary in compensation."

"Indeed, I would do nothing of the kind," said Mr Weir, in a practical manner. "If the lady deserves such munificent treatment, it were unjust to dispense with her services." Mr Masheter agreed with this also. The matter caused his daughter sadness, and although benevolently inclined, he yet could not depart from his resolution. Therefore, to remove the topic, he invited their visitor to a stroll before dinner. While the Squire fetched his hat and stick, Saul Weir obtained another look at the old wood and the arms of his ancestor. Mrs Steele glided up to him, with a peculiarly evil cast of features. "I owe you another for that, Carpenter Weir!" she hissed.

"Your acknowledgment convinces me how necessary it was, madam!" and thus saying, quietly, he turned on his heel.

Walking in the direction of the cave, Mr Masheter explained to his companion the strange freak of their distinguished acquaintance; and Saul, who entertained but slender sympathy with anchorites, thought the proceeding eccentric. The sunlight fell slantways across the interior of the cave, and upon the spare, bent figure, and upon the curious objects he had grouped about him. That lined, stern face, and excitable, spasmodic manner, denoted some stronger motive-power than eccentricity, and Saul Weir scrutinised him more searchingly

than he had done before ; and then, with a low laugh, stepped back to the entrance, and looked out over the brown ridges that the sun was changing to a golden hue.

"I am glad for your sake the weather continues mild, Mr Redland, although I confess I scarcely expected to find you still here."

"The votary of science, my dear sir, is impervious to weather, and to feeling ;" the old man solemnly replied.

"And to greed, sir ?" coldly asked Saul, and Mr Masheter started. It explained all.

CHAPTER XIII.

ETHEL VIRGIL.

HILLSLAND.

Cross the Indian matting to a neat breakfast-room, where a pretty girl is taking some tea from a tea-caddy.

A simple act of daily occurrence; but we glance at her thus, for the reason that one or two little points of character may be gleaned of it.

Did you ever study life at the tea-caddy?

No two ladies approach the domestic office in the same way.

There is the quick, abrupt method: become mechanical by daily exercise, it might be performed by an automaton. And the slow, deliberate method: it is an important matter, and requires reflection; *prestige* is at stake, a reputation weighs upon those little spoonfuls—so many for the company, so much for the pot. You say it is ridiculous studying such minute and trivial things. We are not so sure of that. Where would science be if it never condescended to examine atoms? Well, then, there is the mean method, giving the piled-up spoon or scoop a tap, sending half the crisp, curled leaves back again, using particular caution not to encourage nervousness, while sworn never to bring the goodman of the house to ruin through his tea-caddy. Contrary to which there is the open-hearted, generous method, which gives to family and friends a strong cup of tea at the best price in the market: and that chronically suspicious of the green, adding little to be safe—bought at a dear rate, to be sure. There is the *finikin* method, showing scrupulous niceness, not to say



"A pretty girl is taking some tea from a tea-caddy."—PAGE 178.

affectation. And the reckless, giddy manner, which tosses and pitches it in, regardless of whether it enters the vessel or goes on the carpet. And the absent-minded manner, effected somnolently, or rather dreamily, while the mental disc is a blank. Distinct from which is the thoughtful mode, when the operation is performed abstractedly; ideas are engaged upon something else, and the execution seems to lack motive. There is the nervous, timid treatment, which handles the scoop as though it would bite, and lowers it into the tea as though it would hurt. And the hearty style, which means the brewer is an epicure, proud of past achievements and confident of future triumphs, and never in such glory as when presiding before the fragrant preparation. More beautiful is the loving conduct of those whose souls are lifted by the beverage, to whom the caddy is a casket, its contents the magic deliverance from headache and sadness and weariness: they trifle fondly with young Hyson, inhale the grateful odour of Tetsong, Oolong, and Pekoe, and fairly revel in the choice Kangra-Valley of India.

A character may be fathomed at the tea-caddy, a life may be learned over the tea-pot. These domestic offices are wonderful guides to disposition. A keen scrutiny of parts betrays the whole temperament, and the by-play of the tea-board lays bare the life.

Now we notice that the hand of this fair girl of Hillsland, while she opens the box and lifts the little lids, is small and daintily formed, is gifted with expression of a nice and elegant stamp. She stands very erect, and uses the hands well. Big boys and girls never know what to do with their hands; this one seldom finds them in the way. They do not dangle like the limbs of a scarecrow, nor protrude rigidly, nor fidget awfully, nor appear awkward and unmanageable appendages; but they are uniformly in service, occupied, rhythmically if you care to set them to tone. She handles the pearl-and-silver scoop with a plain but pretty decision, the brief refinement which raises a commonplace duty to a charm; and we think she will make a graceful and ladylike wife some day. She is young yet, but so quietly sensible, years are lost sight

of: we feel to be at once on good terms, and to know her worth instinctively.

She replaces the lids gently, closes the caddy, and walks away with a brisk and happy air. Going out she passes two of the elder scholars crossing the hall to the breakfast-room. They are handsome youths enough, and they look full at her with unmistakable admiration; but she passes on with a modesty and naturalness as becoming as it is rare.

Dr Virgil is a widower. Ethel's mother died when she was ten years of age. Some maiden sisters of the Doctor living in London proposed, and urgently advised, that Ethel should be removed to their care; it seemed scarcely proper that she should be there amongst so many boys, and so on, in the usual style of maiden sisters. To which the Doctor, who partook of the obstinacy in the air about that part, replied with bluntness that she was not amongst the boys, that Providence gave schoolmasters daughters to keep for themselves as well as other folks, and that he approved of the gentle influence of his girl in the school—it tended to preserve refinement in the boys when separated from their sisters and all female contact. Undoubtedly this Preceptor Virgil is possessed of more sense than his class generally.

That settled it. The aunts said no more, were cool in the tone of their letters, and thought if their niece matriculated it would scarcely be with honour. This was the sore point with the lord of Nugent Priory, whose secret has been hinted at, and to which we now come in earnest. He had watched the yearly growing up of the fair girl-graduate, and each year had known more bitter discontent, as she became taller and more beautiful; and there was not so very much difference between the points of objection raised by the aunts and those experienced by the lover. It was anything but agreeable, seeing the school increase in number year by year, tall gentlemanly lads arriving from all parts, many of them taller if not older than Ethel Virgil. A sensitive soul could not be placed more unfortunately than was Lord Lawrence in this attachment. With a hundred and twenty in the field against him,

and a hundred or so more either left or to come, his chance looked unequal.

It was not to be altered, however. He could neither spoil the Doctor's *prestige* and empty the college, nor go back in years and enter as a student himself. It was an unpleasant situation, and he had rated himself severely for his weakness. And his love was worthy of his strongly-contrasted qualities of mind: it was tenacious, stubborn, obstinately unyielding to reason, passionate with an idealism not unusual in the seclusion of the studio.

A man should not conceal his difficulties from his mother, if she happen to be a diplomatist. Lady Nugent would have demolished them without loss of time, and have mercilessly knocked off the shackles from her son's quivering members. It was a dictum of her ladyship's that delicate embarrassments of all sorts yield to skilled diplomacy, and even that most delicate—the *mésalliance*—to sagacious management; that a well-contrived embassy often averts a catastrophe, while preserving the honour of individuals and of nations; that a domestic ambassador is second in importance only to the state plenipotentiary; and that the envoy-extraordinary who quells threatened matrimonial disgrace, is equally as fine a negotiator as one who saves his country from disaster. Lady Nugent firmly and persistently believed that old diplomats like herself were specially accredited with the mission of saving society. But up to this present it had never entered her ladyship's head that there was anything about her son demanding diplomatic treatment. Had she done so, she would not have paused, for diplomatic relationship was fully as urgent as maternal relationship, in the strong-minded old lady's judgment.

Lord Lawrence had kept his secret to himself and his studio, where he sketched the pretty face from memory, painting even a more peach-like bloom upon the cheeks than they possessed in reality, and lived alone with it, so far as devotion to any particular form of beauty was concerned.

His lordship was upon terms of perfect friendship with the Doctor, a man of profound learning, and deeply read upon art,

as in all other subjects. He permitted Ethel to go to the Priory whenever she was invited, and much esteemed the partiality of its noble inmates. To Ethel herself it was always a sincere pleasure. She looked up to the old gentlewoman with the admiring awe a girl does sometimes experience in the company of an aged and almost regal lady. Sweetly willing; patiently sitting out tedious holding of worsted or merino, while her ladyship ran on dictatorially concerning everything, from her own constitution to that of the country, there never was a more tractable votary to any seeress. She would do anything, listen to anything; but it was with other ears than those with which she listened to the lady's son. Indeed, this courtly painter, with whom Ethel had been upon terms of social intimacy from her earliest childhood, had made a strong impression upon her heart. It was not a feeling resembling love, so much as an upward, adoring worship—he was so gifted with all that is calculated to attract that youthful feeling. He charmed her by arts the most various, and all of them of a standard higher than is usual in the world. He tried to do so; it was his only resource in the contest with the unknown odds against him. He succeeded. The beautiful pupil to whom he taught painting, music, and poetry, caught up something besides,—that witchery of captivated senses that was as worship, if not love. He hoped to gain for himself her whole undivided fancy; he entered the lists with stripplings of whom, for all he knew, she might be thinking a great deal. It was a delicate rivalry. He was advanced in years, and lacked the vivacity genial girlhood loves so well; but he had much to put against this,—his polished influence, his unrivalled power of pleasing, his commanding dignity, his title—of which every girl thinks something, and always will in this world.

At last Lord Lawrence made up his mind to take counsel with an old, tried, and trusted friend, whom he had consulted before upon other matters, and always with profit. This was Lord Gascoyne, whose intimacy with the Nugents was of very old date, and whose friendship with Lord Lawrence was unselfish and devoted in the extreme. He liked this vigorous hermit who had the courage to reside alone with his

hobbies, obstinately eccentric, courteously kind, buried in that fine old mansion with his contumacious lady-mother. He had known Nugent all his life, and knew no other man resembling him in goodness, independence, peculiarity; no other man with as tender a heart, as pugnacious a will, as clear a head; the last man he thought who would ever be capable of weakness, or likely to lean to the infirmities of human nature. Lord Lawrence was aware that his friend thought thus of him, and contemplated his approaching confidence with timidity. He did not want to forfeit Gascoyne's good opinion, and he held the greatest horror of being laughed at, and almost as great a horror of not being sympathised with when demanding sympathy. If Gascoyne pooh-poohed the boys of Hillsland as being unworthy of anxiety, or, worse still, ridiculed the attachment he experienced, he did not know what he would do, with his secret bared to pitying, perhaps mocking, criticism. No! He knew Gascoyne better than that. If not endorsed with his valuable approval, it would never be outraged. Lord Lawrence thought well before committing his purpose to execution, as he had thought well over his attachment. His quiet life afforded time and opportunity for well thinking out a matter or a project beforehand. Some of us know the privilege of drawing aside to reflect, to think out life's great problem, to let the crowd go on, while we hide and meditate in secret. How the tinsel peels off then, and how small and artificial seems the scheme of our existence, so different to what it was intended to be! This artist-lord pondered much at times. But all his thought was in favour of the consultation with his friend, and eventually he dropped this note to him:—

THE PRIORY, LEAMINGTON.

DEAR GASCOYNE,—

I want to ask your advice in a little matter which somewhat troubles me. If not particularly engaged, I wish you would run over for a day or two, and oblige yours,

LAWRENCE NUGENT.

Lord Gascoyne did so at once, with his accustomed good-nature; and his friend seized a fitting moment to bear him off to the studio and there launch the object in view. Lord Gascoyne sat looking on the carpet, tracing the ins and outs of its Turkish intricacy. He was not one to stare at a friend all the time of a delicate communication, just because he happened to be upon good terms with him. But as he went on, Lord Gascoyne did really look up with surprise—not at his friend's weakness, but because he was in a similar plight himself; and, if the truth must be confessed, Lord Gascoyne felt rather glad of it. He smilingly said at once, "I do give you the utmost sympathy, and, indeed, I can really sympathise with you. I am in much the same predicament, and as miserable as I can be over it." And Gascoyne narrated his own love affair with the sportive Louise, at which they pulled long faces together, then set to consoling each other as best they could. It reads ludicrously, but they were uncommonly serious over it. They might not have as long days in the land as a boy of Hillsland, or a strapping young farmer of Suffolk, but they were fully as desirous to spend them happily, and they commiserated each other finely. They were placed so very much alike, they could feel for each other acutely, and without the least lurking of a smile at either's expense. If there was the shadow of an advantage Lord Lawrence had it, for his sweetheart did certainly sit at his feet a disciple—reverent, meek, and gentle; which description scarcely applies to the animated nymph of the woodlands. Burke has said, "We submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us,"—a pointed truth.

Having exchanged confidences and comfort, they came to the more immediate purpose of counsel, and told each other what each would do if in the other's place, upon which they were also in sympathy and upon terms of mutual agreement; the recommendation—personal and relative—being to come to a decisive understanding at once with their respective lady-loves.

"And I hope," said Lord Lawrence, generously, "I may hear this Spring of the home-coming of a bride to Beechester Towers!"

"I am sure I hope you may, my dear fellow; wishing also the same happy sequel for yourself."

"Ay, there's the rub. What my mother will say to it, I can't think. She is very strong-minded, as you know; and ever since my brother made a matrimonial mistake—in the opinion of her ladyship—it has caused her to be more strongly prejudiced than ever."

"Well, like me, you are old enough to act for yourself, Nugent; and, with all due respect for my lady's crotchets, I think her province is rather political than domestic."

Age was a sore point with Lord Lawrence—the sore point in more ways than wooing. He had lived so many years with Lady Nugent free from dissension, although in the very midst of party intrigues, it quite unsettled him to think of a disturbance at this late day; and disturbance there would be he was well convinced—first the age, and next the station, of the proposed *fiancée* subjecting her to the dowager's disapproval.

"Upon the question of age I agree with you," he said, "and it would almost sanction our abandonment of these cherished projects; but then we possess, I hope, worth which comes alone of age. Haydon, whom I quote far more frequently than any one else, because he wrote and did more wise and pithy things than any other man, said that 'men who have reached and passed forty-five, have a look as if waiting for the secret of the other world, and as if they were perfectly sure of having found out the secret of this.' I believe we have arrived at the point of knowing how to love with faithfulness, behave with gentleness, bear with failings, and honestly respect from first to last those we are about to wed; and if so, the stage from which we embark is not any too sound by reason of its long-standing!"

"Hear, hear!" said Lord Gascoyne, with the cordiality of a man who listens to an unexceptionably good grace.

Had a reporter been present at this conference of elderly lovers, he would undoubtedly have made capital out of the nice things these noblemen said to one another. Had one been a gourmet and the other a gourmand, they could not have spoken daintier or more palatable truths to the benefit

of each. Lord Lawrence felt supremely satisfied with the result of their confidences: he was very sensitive, and his friend's approval of the course he proposed taking was strengthening. That an inimical voice has uttered its little blame, is often synonymous with a broad, deep wound; and that a word of concurrence has been spoken, is the satisfaction of a purpose.

After all this they returned to the drawing-room, much upon the principle of moths fluttering around a candle to test the temper of its flame before burning themselves.

A slight disdain and petulance were noticeable in her ladyship's manner: she had discovered something rotten in the state of Denmark, and was exercised in consequence. Writing upon ivory tablets, of which she kept one for each country with its name engraved upon it; treating with derision the counter-negotiations of every ministry except her own; disentangling as she went on from memory the cabals and intrigues of designing statesmen and their back-stair cliques for a century past; thwarting some infamous *ruse de guerre* by one single stroke of her firm lily-hand; muttering to herself the grand cabinet axioms of the Duchess of Marlborough; twitching crossly at her brocaded gown before any extra-troublesome conspiracy, while the fine old lace worn deep and full around her shoulders was shaken by the emotion agitating her, while exposing the perfidious machinations of barbarians and anarchs; looking from below her grey brows, pent and knit but beautiful, hither and thither across the room, as though it was crowded by a shadowy throng of pompous vassals of the European Courts; and seeing upon the carpet imaginary compacts, treaties, and leagues she had trampled on because the wretches and traitors had not kept to their conditions. All this produced considerable business, and might well cause its directress to look petulant and harassed at the time the gentlemen entered the room.

"I hope your ladyship is well," said Lord Gascoyne, after a gallant obeisance worthy of a knight of the middle ages.

"No, my dear lord, I am not well; the longer I live the worse I feel. The depravity and corruption of your sex are

enough to kill any woman who thoughtfully reflects upon the subject!"

Lord Gascoyne gently whisked out a pocket-handkerchief, passed it lightly across his handsome mouth while looking from the corners of his eyes at his friend Lawrence, and replied with gravity, "They are very bad, I do fear."

"Bad, my lord? Demoniactal! I have just found out another pretty instance of their craft that ought to have been exposed years ago! I suspected it; I was certain there was something, from the colour of the speeches in the Upper House. How relieved I feel now I have found this out also before my days are numbered! But it's sufficient to exhaust every drop of patience in one's temperament."

"You are still as unremitting in your laudable ambition to set things straight."

"Now, I ask you, my lord, where—would—this—country—be—if—more—than—theoretical—interest—was not displayed by *some one*? I am far from proud of the mission; it is not now a nice country to interest one's self in, but I do so for the love of a past that is rapidly becoming but an august tradition."

"I have no doubt that what your ladyship affirms is perfectly true. It is right that somebody should take an interest in politics. For my part, I hate them!"

"It is accounted for," said the Dowager Lady Nugent, quietly. "Your ancestors veered liked the wind; there was no Conservative rectitude in any of them. When not acting traitorously they were advising treacherously, and there was not an honest man amongst them!"

Whatever his lordship might think of this blunt opinion, he was too well acquainted with Lady Nugent's outspoken frankness to betray the mortification he naturally experienced. Lord Lawrence was annoyed on his friend's behalf, and observed, "The Gascoynes are an ancient and noble family, dear mother, who have done good service to king and country; while the famous Sir William was as independent and honourable as yourself: what Sir Edward Coke calls 'the gladsome light of jurisprudence' has had no more luminous example than the old Chief-Justice of King's Bench."

"Thanks, Lawrence, for looking up my people," said Lord Gascoyne, laughing; "I believe there have been some good souls among the bad ones."

"Impossible," said her ladyship, inflexibly; "I have gone carefully into the antecedents of yours with other families, and find it one of the most unprincipled of the many unprincipled families of England, invariably unscrupulous, and for five centuries without a truth-teller amongst them."

His lordship turned smiling, but with a flushed cheek, to Lord Lawrence. "This is pleasant, isn't it," he said, "for any one proud of their family?"

"Well, if you really are proud of them, you ought to have it taken out of you;" and with severe sternness, speaking imperiously as a sovereign, Lady Nugent added, "To be proud of a disgrace is irremissible. My ancestors had no conscience, but yours had no mind at all; vanes, turning with every breath, and always indicating contrary to what would have been expected of them. It took me many a weary hour to go back into their muddled history, and a pretty set I've found them! At the beck and call of every charlatan in power, ready to beggar themselves when they should have been bettering their fortunes, forfeiting their privileges right and left; but there! I've no patience to go into it—I can only tell you that you would have enjoyed a dukedom had it not been for their bungling and Whiggery."

"I know they were broad and liberal in their views."

"Call it that if you like, my lord!" the old lady interrupted, angrily; "to me it represents determined obstinacy, than which there is not a more detestable failing. You only know them by name, by the glossing archives of lineage, and by flattering old portraits that present them fair enough upon the front; but I know them from innermost study, and I tell you the men were Judases and the women Jezebels!"

With this final criticism, Lady Nugent arose and paced the drawing-room with haughty excitement and indignation. Lord Gascoyne knew that he was not dealt more hardly with than were other visitors who differed in politics, and he was too well-bred to manifest annoyance. And so long as her lady-

ship dealt gently with her son later on, he would not complain. He did just comment—

“My forefathers had the sublime endurance which made men, heroes, and martyrs of the Waldenses, Lollards, and Puritans.”

Her ladyship was down upon him instantly. “What is endurance without loyalty? For where there is no loyalty there can be no truth. Eighteen hundred years have men been growing in comely stature, but are still defective, and will be until truth is the outcome of their progress. There is a deficit of truth, and while this continues there can be no backbone to stability.”

“My mother sometimes tells me there is no truth in art!” observed Lord Lawrence, while Lady Nugent stood in the centre of the room leaning one exquisite hand upon a table, while with the other she pointed to a miniature of herself.

“To go no further, look at that lie on ivory, where the chief of our painters limned goodness on my face when he should have been content to interpret beauty.”

“Lady Nugent is a severe critic,” said Lord Gascoyne; while her ladyship sat down and began to knit, her proud lips curved disdainfully.

“I do not like nor agree with criticism,” answered Lord Lawrence, with a reflective air: “there are those who, having long passed the goal, yet, for the instruction and entertainment of mankind, paint or write still; these should be sacred from the knife of the anatomist. Possibly criticism is necessary in any land possessing a broad truthful literature——”

“Where is that land?” asked Lady Nugent, coldly.

“Excuse me, my dear mother, I was going to add that courtesy was even more necessary.”

“Criticism is good, is a power, so it be gracious.” Thus Lord Gascoyne.

“Criticism is a power only when it is pungent!” We need scarcely say, from her ladyship.

“Criticism is destructive to faith.” Thus Lord Lawrence, adding, “Many an ambitious theme has died upon the brain for lack of the faith necessary for its completion; and many

a wondrous dream has been lost for want of that encouragement which would have turned the scale." This was said with tenderness and feeling, and the others did not reply. Lord Lawrence, after a minute or two, continued: "Threads finer than spiders' webs divide the painter's inspired enthusiasm from the depths of hurt delicacy and wounded sensitiveness. Disappointments may be overcome, mortifications be surmounted, and obstacles be crushed; but the mental sensibility, once blotted, can never be restored to its original fineness. The warped edge of the highly-tempered steel may be improved upon so as to deceive the ordinary eye, but it can never be restored to that first keenness of invisible edge which constituted its supreme first quality."

"I think you are right," said Lord Gascoyne; "some productions may live more by abuse and opposition than by favour, and blows may in the end be but kind steps to popularity. The aggrieved may fight with daring ability for the honour of their creations, but, as a rule, the very nature of the painter or the poet forbids such a course, and his ideals perish at the coarser touch."

Lady Nugent, who was never tired of listening to her son, heard his friend with impatience, and quickly settled the matter for both of them: "In this age private sentiment weighs before accuracy of judgment, review is the echo of party feeling, literary notices are the channel of personal invective, and criticism is degraded to the level of slander."

Her ladyship's own criticism was always intended to be unanswerable—neither did they attempt it; and soon afterwards Lord Gascoyne took his leave with a cordial, encouraging grasp of her son's hand.

Then, in the seclusion of the studio, Lord Lawrence thought over it all.

And he was not over-sanguine. He knew something of the insufficiency of expectation; earlier in life, he had been disappointed and deceived. A thoughtful man, devoted to his art, a student of humanity, experimentalist in bold schemes, unconditional and unconventional, possessing too great faith perhaps with too little caution, but altogether a noble-minded,

high souled gentleman; and not always thus reserved and isolated.

It was no slender regard that he experienced for this dainty girl-companion. He had come down from his starry dreams and pretty fancies of the night-time, left his fine shreds of poetry and sweet remembrance of an old love entanglement, when days seemed crimson and heavy-scented by reason of one rose magnificent and queen-like; and had laid this lily, fragile, small, fairy light, inestimably delicate, on the heart pained of old and with a dead sorrow, and it kindled a rarer affection, chaste as was due, of a wonderful strength, sensitive, and crowned loftily by regardful memory of her youth.

The utter, complete, and most cruel selfishness natural to youth was happily absent from Ethel's nature: she was not blind to a tenderness that had indeed been her unbroken study; and she gave in return, despite the attachment to her boy-friend, a fulness of affection he might very pardonably flatter himself was love. But until receiving the assurance from her own lips, he would not build his hopes upon it: hopes built without cement, he knew, are blown to pieces by the first gust.

Yet she was so compassionately thoughtful. If she saw a shadow upon that kindest of kind faces, she would seek to banish it. Remarking sadness sometimes, and unchiding, uncomplaining pain, she took unto herself reproach, feeling that, though innocent as the angels are, she was in very truth the cause. And this made him still more regardful of her love, as elevated as it was gentle, and approaching that wonderful obedience of the soul termed worship.

Her voice stole softly amidst hushed music of the other days, and his life was made song-like by it, more full of music than of yore, vibratory, sufferingly pleased by it, until it was as opera that follows one in dreams, and is perfect only by pained efforts of recollection.

The love Ethel experienced for his lordship was of larger expanse, of deeper intensity, of an altogether different nature to that she felt for Arthur Penryllon; it was blended with admiring reverence, mixed up with girlhood's loftier romance;

no passionate whim, delicate, warmly sincere, impulsively tender, as was her love for the boy, but a strong, well-rooted, firmly-grounded attachment, that had grown gradually, with her years, health, and beauty, part of herself. She had kept it hidden from all, and especially from him; aware by exquisite instinct of the higher modesty which consecrates reserve, and valuing the opinion of him whom she had learnt, if she had learnt nothing else, to admire with a faithful reverence, and to love with an honest love.

Lord Lawrence, as a preliminary step, despatched this note:—

DEAR DR VIRGIL,—

We shall be very pleased to see Ethel to luncheon to-morrow. I have just completed some sketches from Tennyson's 'Princess' which I should like her to look at; nothing ambitious, but she may honour me by being pleased therewith, in which case I propose asking her acceptance of them. Stevens will bear to you a parcel of books—some choice classics received since I saw you; pray give me your opinion of these at your leisure. You will, as I do, admire the binding? 'Le Moyen Age et la Renaissance,' and the 'Dictionnaire de l'Architecture,' par Viollet-le-Duc; the 'Va sublime' of Tasso, an édition de luxe; Caxton's 'Dictes and Sayenges of the Philosophres; 'Romans et Contes' de M. de Voltaire; 'Homeri Opera Græce;' and Dugdale's 'Monasticon Anglicanum,' by Bozerain, Capé, Rivière, R. Petit, Lortic, and Bedford, are especially commendable.

I trust the severe headache from which you were suffering has abated, and that you are more yourself.

*With our kindest remembrance to dear Ethel.—
Ever truly yours,*

LAWRENCE NUGENT.

As usual, a note from the Priory caused pleasure, and to Ethel no little beating of the heart. The old place was so in

contrast with the hideous modern building known as the College, it was always like stepping back into baronial times and living another life. That august lady, imperious, commanding, hating intensely the effeminacy of the nineteenth century, and making a dead-set against all modern institutions, seemed so exactly in character with her noble dwelling, it added to the romantic illusion. Then her son, in whom there seemed centred the chivalry, learning, and courtliness of a Bayard, was also inseverably associated with that surrounding of picturesque tradition. Ethel's visits were seasons of delicious reverie, her friend the kingly mentor moulding and shaping them to higher thought; for hers was a receptive nature, and the grave, poetic, uncommon depth of mind in her friend, found its reflex in her exquisite understanding. Whether roaming the great library, looking at his latest work in the studio, or spending rapturous afternoons in the pleasure attached to the Priory, it was all a succession of delights.

On the following day she was shown the collection of delicate outline drawings suggested by the Laureate's poem,—pretty fancies gracefully executed, to which the designer lent additional charm from having introduced the face of his sweetheart in every drawing.

Nevertheless this poem was for a long time only a partial favourite with his lordship. The sovereign sportiveness, running like a silver thread through its progress, seemed to detract from the dignity associated with the Laureate's work, and he returned to the magnificent repose of the "Memoriam," unwilling that his loyalty should be disturbed. But read again in the shady depth of forest arches, with the sun painting a lace-work upon the moss, and all the air sleepy with summer-heat,—read by some tiny woodland rivulet, with shaken clusters of forget-me-not at his feet, with a couch of bruised flowers and an old mossed boulder for a pillow,—read thus with some lazy trill of a languid bird in his ear amid the broken splendour of a summer noon, he learned to love it.

Sooner or later all people awake to the consciousness that we cannot rush upon a poet at random, or break upon a poem

at any time with the uncereemonious want of thought proverbially English. As we would use care, discretion, tact, and delicacy, in calling upon strangers, selecting the proper time, forming their acquaintance with reserve and dignity,—the same good manners should apply when interviewing great writers.

This Watteau-conceit of the "Princess," which might have been interpreted in the most exquisite of old china; this charming medley of modern manner and time-worn chivalry; this pretty play of satire, of love, and of philosophy, with its wealth of beauty and eloquence, and its grace of pleasantry and *badinage*, is essentially the garden poem of our literature. We are admitted to the flower-crowded domain of the writer's fancy, left to luxuriate among fruits and flowers, fountains, terraces, and statues. The masque passes before us. We leave our little geometric rules—they are not wanted in taking height and depth and length and breadth of this romance of faithful love and knightly triumph—and we surrender ourselves to its ambrosial, nectared, elysian influence.

The gardens of the Priory were connected with the gardens of the "Princess" in Ethel's imagination, because she had there first heard him read it, with all the bewitching eloquence he knew so well how to impart; and here he again asked her to walk, after showing the drawings.

It was a beautiful afternoon, warm and sunny, and sweet with the first freshness of spring. In the days when the formal or grotesque box lent ornament, so-called, to English gardens, this of Leamington Priory had been foremost in illustration of the quaint disfigurement; but it had now grown and luxuriated in unpruned, shapeless disorder. Her ladyship said there was no gardener alive who could cut box as it ought to be cut, and it should be left untouched. And it was so. All very wild and unfettered, thoroughly old-fashioned, and far more beautiful than any of the mosaics of colour and intricacies of design introduced from Italy, it was just such a sylvan demesne as Watteau would have seized upon for describing those accessories of sunny pleasure, which have made him the garden idealist for all time. There were natural bowers and rosaries, glens where the lilies reigned alone, ar-

caedes of luxuriant creepers, and solitudes sacred to the blue-bells; groves of fern, slenderly frail, and graceful as the mistress of Nugent Priory; moss, close and even, as though woven of the loom. Everywhere nature had strewn her jewels and decked with chaplet and coronal the province where she reigned supreme. Lady Nugent loved it for its reminder of old times, his lordship for its unartistical perfection. Thus it was left to itself, and was infinitely beautiful.

No amount of horticultural skill could have arranged anything so effective as the crumbling terrace, in and out of which trailed lustrous creepers, and the graceful columns of which were draped thick about with ivy. Even the great grey-green fountain, that had long ceased to add to the animation of the scene, was more picturesque than any modern construction would have been. Water-lilies, venerable monarchs with crowns of gold, were marshalled in elegant retinue around the basin. Nugent was famed for its broad majestic water-lilies. Her ladyship was very proud of them. "You are thoroughly welcome to your camellias," she would say; "but give me my water-lilies." They were very fine, and were justly admired; but then one could not wear a water-lily in the hair (it would sometimes be remarked), to which the dowager would respond with expression, "And I should like to know what business anybody has to wear flowers in the hair. If God didn't create the women for something better, I fancy He did the flowers!" So there was an end of it. Thus the realm of the water-lily was undisturbed also, and the stone was grown over with short grey-green sundew, and by ragged weed, that made poor lace-like efforts to adorn the ancient rampart, and by yellow and brown lichen, delicate and fragile: when the moonbeams changed the circle to a colosseum for fairies and night-folk, these were each a velvet fauteuil; forget-me-nots circled the inner lining of the stone, dragon-flies spun through these, purple moths fluttered at eventide, and before Hesperus was hung upon the blue, the gem of the ephemera, the course of the mirrored arena was run, and stillness and a hueless ring alone remained, while the garden caught the twilight's kiss.

This fountain was a favourite spot, and thither he led her willingly,—he had done so many a time and oft before; and she was innocent of deeper thought this time than that she loved the place,—loved him.

The odorous air of the shrubberies, scented with warm spice-perfume, such as one bears memory of whose stay in Ceylon the cinnamon-trees have shed incense upon, and which, whenever breathed again, brings back old fragrance of the Indian Ocean; the tender tints in the sky, and softened shades around; the unusually serious expression worn by her lover, and the solicitude in his glance,—all impressed Ethel, although she was far from expecting what was in store; but he noticed the pretty head droop a little before ever he said a word.

“Ethel!”

She looked up instantly, confidently.

“I wish to say a word to you, here where we have passed so much pleasant time, have forgotten, I think—at least I have—the whole world, and thought only of ourselves. Is it not so?” watching her closely.

“Yes,” she said, looking up again into his comely face with bright and glad acknowledgment of its truth.

“And I don’t think there is anywhere else you visit,—no other fountain by which some other friend has talked agreeable nothings!”

“You know there is not,” she said, reproachfully, a tear glittering, to be shaken from the lashes while she leaned against the stonework looking down upon the turf at her feet. She put one of the pretty hands in his with a nestling confidence thrilling him.

“You may or may not have begun to think about what I am going to speak—perhaps if my preference had choice, it would be that you had not. I am wishing to talk to you of love—ask you if you have ever loved—can ever love—will love—*love me?*”

He felt her trembling cruelly, and the thought stabbed him that he had been abrupt, too sudden; but they were such old friends, and had been on the border of it for so long. Yes, he

felt glad it was commenced ; it might terminate some of the miserable suspense.

Ethel was now trembling at the close of life's first sunny day—childhood. It had been long and bright enough ; it must some time or other come to its end. Perhaps this was as pleasant a way as any. Certainly it did seem to have come to its end when the consciousness that a declaration of love had been made transformed everything. The fountain stood forth more vividly, its outline clearly cut and prominent ; things of the garden grew into strong shape, as though the fancies of a dream petrified. The dear old playtime glided silently back, a something, she knew not what, closed as a subtle barrier ; a new experience flowed upon her quietly in those heart-beating instants ; she felt older, she was wiser, and she trembled at the close of the day that nearest approaches the day of an immortal.

It certainly did come upon her very suddenly, if it but uttered in words the undefined enjoyment that had given her so great delight. He desired it so, planned it purposely, much wished for the spontaneous reply, whatever it might be, all unfettered by conventional premeditation and worldly wisdom, and he was favoured with this. Truly he thought it worthy a daughter of Virgil.

" I can and do love," she said—" love you."

And then, as though half ashamed of the quick confession, bowed her head, blushing. It had been said so suddenly, frank as a thought, free as some passionate truth stolen upward unawares, he could not but experience a large measure of satisfaction thus far. But then, like the sage lovers of all time, he must dally with his pleasure, trying to make himself miserable over it, racking his brain with the old uneasiness, and scarcely content to find things so smooth. How like the finite ! How opposed to the temperate majesty of an infinite calm content ! And he grew pale as the grey-green sun-dew, nurturing the torment, plausibly wooing her to tell him more, especially if she cared a little also for somebody else, friend beyond the College, or pupil or tutor within. And it embarrassed her, which he noted greedily, quivering before it. Cost what

it would, he wished for the truth. She looked up in his face a little troubled, then laid a hand upon his arm lightly, but as though to stay his turning from her, and she said, sweetly, "You will be angry?"

"Good gracious no, dear Ethel! Rather will I enter into your little attachments, giving you sympathy, as is due! Make me your confidant in full. Let me hear all about it. Tell me candidly all you would like to. Loving you as I do, I shall eagerly hear anything about yourself. Let us walk about; this water gives one the chills!" Shivering, he walked quickly to warm himself, but with so jerking and spasmodic a movement she could scarcely keep up with him. Then he cried, with mock playfulness, "Well, go on, lady mine. Tell me who else has a niche in that dear little heart?" He could not blame her if she pained him, seeing that he so pressed her to do so.

Then Ethel, who was open as the day, told him of her love for Penryllon; of the boy's love for her; describing him with dainty truthfulness and with such sympathy, his lordship was really interested in that forlorn young rival, and felt almost light-hearted again. It was all clear and probable. He even admitted Ethel had behaved with appropriate tenderness; and he believed that, after all, there was very little to fear. He was touched by her ingenuous confidence. The prettiness of it charmed him. He felt that he loved her more than ever. He thought no better moment could be seized, and with a return to the old melodious voice so well beloved by her, he pleaded, "Let me ask your father's consent to take you from him altogether, Ethel?"

With a grave impulsive movement, which was like an affecting farewell to her childhood, she put her hands restingly upon his shoulders, looking up with beautiful thoughtfulness into his kingly face, the haughtiness of which melted to infinite tenderness; then she leaned her brow upon his bosom and burst into tears.

It was all so sudden and unexpected, he was unable to grasp the depth of that emotion. Feeling had been played upon one vibration too far. Had he known the depth of her fondness he would not have tampered with its confes-

sion. He stroked her soft hair with soothing, reassuring tenderness.

"Thanks, pretty bird, for this; it will make us better friends than ever before;—if you will, and when you will, *sweethearts*."

He left it there, with delicacy fine as her own innocence.

They felt nearer and dearer friends for the episode of true sincerity.

Neither ever forgot that spring-tide afternoon; it was one of those upon which a jewel seems set for evermore.

Of blameless years, a pen of wondrous witchery, a brush of rare delicacy, and a grave courtliness of life that, without publicity, had won regard of all men, his happiness had hung upon the favour of this pretty child of learning. And now all was well, so far. To-morrow there would be the placing of it before her ladyship, and he certainly felt at first a little dubious; but one success is an encouragement, and he became more hopeful. In all his life he had marred but one thing—his own happiness. All that he had ever touched he beautified—save his own destiny. If there was to be a transformation it would open such joys as had not yet been known. He would have his life melodious, and it was not his fault it had been a book of solemn song.

Next day his lordship took occasion to introduce the subject to his mother. It was the first time that he had ever broached any hint of his attachment. Much as he revered and admired Lady Nugent, she was essentially one of those women no sensitive person could confide in. But he thought it wise to make sure concerning the reception to be accorded his young *fiancé*.

When he entered the morning-room after breakfast, he found Lady Nugent engaged in looking over a mass of diplomatic correspondence, and referring to the leading morning journals—not of the day—but of some five-and-thirty years back: her ladyship would scarcely have deigned to devote valuable time to affairs of the present day, when, according to her judgment, policy was puerile and diplomacy a deception. No; she had, during a review of past situations, descried some-

thing out of its order just about that period, and was setting this right, abusing the Ministers all round during the process for the trouble they gave her.

She held a large ivory tablet, the size of a child's slate, and thereon pencilled her strategy and *expose* of other people's artifice, until it presented a complicated maze of tactics which only the brain of an admirer of a Duchess of Marlborough could, by any possibility, disentangle.

Lady Nugent's morning-gown consisted of a chintz-pattern black-ground silk, of a design and brilliancy of colour now seldom seen ; yet, although bountiful with sprigs of many-hued flowers, tastefully tied with lover's knots of many-hued ribbons, the general height of bright shading was so toned by a large dispersion over the field of black, it presented no garish or gaudy effect, but, on the contrary, seemed just the dress one would expect to find the old lady wearing while presiding in state at the important deliberations engaging her earnest attention. Her lace was always a study. Next to the plumage of birds, and the waxen folds of her water-lilies, Lady Nugent considered lace one of the most beautiful of objects, and her collection was perhaps the finest of any private lady in the kingdom. Naturally, being a person of good taste, she did not wear lace of an equal costliness during the earlier half of the morning to that worn after noon, when the magnificent brocades were adjusted upon her stately figure by the devoted maid who had grown grey in her service. Lady Nugent had no trouble whatever with her servants, and could not comprehend the great modern cry of their degeneracy. *Her* servants never wanted to change their situation, nor get married, nor go home to see sick mothers, nor entertain brothers or cousins ; they did not die, nor were periodically ill, nor dressed in a highty-flighty fashion, but were genteel maids and men, of unquestionable respectability, whom, thanks to her diplomacy, the devil could never get near enough to tempt. Amongst other foes, her ladyship considered herself more than a match for the Evil One, and bade him beware of coming any of his crafty designs upon her establishment. She was quite of opinion he had existed in the flesh in the person of Niccolo Machia-

velli; and as she was for ever waging war with Machiavelism, it was a perpetual contest of skill between them, in which the old lady firmly believed she always came off best. Not the least effective part of her ladyship's dress was the fine black tulle thrown in careless folds over her head and as carelessly tied under the chin; it left the white hair above the forehead arranged with striking beauty. This was the simple toilet; in the evening the tulle was not worn, and the hair was of itself as imposing as a crown.

"Are you at liberty a while, my dear mother?" asked his lordship, with marked respect. Lady Nugent, interrupted in important deliberation, bowed gravely.

"Sit down, Lawrence, I will not keep you waiting long. I am for the moment confused by the significant visit of the King of Prussia to England in '42, together with the imposition of the Income-tax, the first visit of the Queen to Scotland, and a disadvantageous peace with China. I well remember my sentiments at the time, and I wasn't a bit surprised the poor dear Duke of Sussex died shortly afterwards; it was the only thing he could do. And I find no difficulty in reconciling events with the visit of the Queen to the Orleans family at Chateau d'Eu; while in the following year Louis Philippe was airing his upstart ignorance under the countenance of our royalty. It is not very wonderful to find these journals question the motive behind the Emperor of Russia's visit in '44. I could have told them. Indeed, I did try to stir your poor father up, but he was always of that torpid and enervating nature adverse to national spirit. Do you think that I could get that man to move? No, never; as true as I'm left to mourn his inactivity! Determined not to enter Parliament, he used to wax irritable when I expressed my wish to do so; and had it not been for your brother, always his mother's champion, I should have had a wretched time of it; but when *he* contracted the miserable *mésalliance* he did, my only supporter was removed, and—well, you know the result—the country sank to its present level. You, I regret to say, inherit in some degree your father's inert temperament; the impassive disregard of European affairs characterising your treatment of questions

of the day is very sad, although, mind you, I am willing to admit they are not worthy the reflection of a Nugent!"

The somewhat contradictory ending to her ladyship's long address was allowed to pass; it was no unusual peroration. But her son did just add—"Kindly take into consideration that I experience no interest whatever in the affairs of Europe beyond its affairs of art, to which I should devote larger attention had I larger means."

"I have often told you that at my death—which I shall put off as long as possible—your income will be more adapted to your deserts."

"I came in this morning to talk with you upon another matter connected with my future." The old lady looked up in a moment, with instant suspiciousness; but she waited for him to proceed, without comment, sitting aggressively stately and erect. "I have been seriously contemplating marriage, providing, that is, I gain your consent!"

Lady Nugent sat in the same unbending posture, looking hard and with partly closed eyes to quicken the sight, as though uncertain whether she had heard correctly. Crossing her hands slowly and shrugging her shoulders sornily, she coldly remarked, "They say old fools are the worst. May I ask the title of the family to be honoured?"

"No family, my dear mother; it is our friend Dr Virgil's daughter!"

Lady Nugent arose indignantly, stood at her full height, and seemed to scath her son with bitter words and looks. "A pretty *liaison* truly, with a babe hardly out of her swaddling clothes! But the chit shall not come here again. A designing minx, who will develop into a Brinvilliers: I can read it in her. You little think how keenly I have observed her while holding my wools; nothing indicates character more truthfully than the manner of doing that. You grieve me, Lawrence. What *can* you be thinking of? Her affections will change fifty times in as many years! And what are the people? Where do they come from? The sooner you rid yourself of the mania the better; and meantime I desire the monkey keeps clear of the Priory. Now, I bethink me, I do

recall sly glances with all her pretended coyness. Oh, how I wish I had her here to give her a piece of my mind! I can scarcely contain myself to think I did not see it before! Admiring my hair indeed, and putting on quite a show of deferential and obedient affection!" Her ladyship was too indignant to utter another word. She sat back fuming, while her son with calm tenderness spoke in behalf of his slighted love.

"All my life, mother, no disagreement has crossed our happiness. I have treated you with uniform respect and duty. I am now sorry to have given you displeasure, and am pained to hear you speak harshly of Ethel, whose affection for yourself is sincere. I was under the impression you liked her, and certainly thought my happiness was more to you than a personal prejudice. I am aware you wish to have me at the Priory, and in consequence I will not ask to leave you, only give me permission to bring Ethel home as one of us. I will not contract this union if you withhold your consent, but I hope to gain it. After-reflection will suggest that you have dealt harshly with us; you will think so when your own good heart is calmer; and I need not tell you how gratefully any sign of your relenting will be welcomed."

The temperate tone of his reply certainly moved the lady. Her *hauteur* melted. Her fine eyes filled with large teardrops, and she held forth her beautiful hand. He advanced quickly, a glad light over all his face, and kneeling, kissed it, forgivingly, lovingly.

This was another clear victory. And in the matter of the third interview—that with the young lady's father—he fancied it would be very smooth sailing indeed. He set sail that same day, entering Hillsland harbour at noon. Dr Virgil came to him at once. He cordially grasped the Doctor by the hand. Then this passed:—

DOCTOR. "I have to thank you for the volumes you sent me, which I will take every care of. Very kind and thoughtful, I'm sure."

LORD NUGENT. "Do not mention it. I knew your taste for that sort of thing."

DOCTOR. "If I was in a position to do so, I should spend money upon little else."

LORD N. "It will give me great pleasure if you will accept them."

DOCTOR. "You are too good; we are already so indebted, this last favour places me under embarrassing obligation. My daughter has confided to me the honour you have done her. I was expecting this visit."

LORD N. (*gratefully*). "How considerate of you to break the ice in this way; it saves me a formal introduction. I have this morning obtained Lady Nugent's consent to our marriage. If you give me yours, my happiness is insured."

DOCTOR (*his hand straying unconsciously to his waistcoat pocket*). "I thank you, my lord. Of course no parent could be insensible to the advantages attending so brilliant an alliance, with a noble family, to a nobleman in all respects so honourable. It has placed me in a strait from which I am compelled to extricate myself by respectfully and gratefully declining your offer for my daughter's hand."

LORD N. (*hotly, but very cold all over*). "This is unexpected, Doctor Virgil,—terribly so. I fear you are considering the disparity of age, but allow me to——"

DOCTOR. "Pardon me, I wish to disabuse your mind of that idea; it does not weigh with my decision."

LORD N. (*hurriedly and excited*). "Perhaps you object to Ethel's coming to reside at the Priory? If so——"

DOCTOR. "Not at all. Do, pray, pardon my interrupting you again. I can best shorten your suspense by explaining fully the motives really influencing me. Some years ago a little fellow was placed under my care by his guardian: he had no parents living, no near relative to care for him, and his friendlessness won upon our sympathy. His graces of disposition and manner, his delicate health and gentle nature, caused us to feel most affectionately disposed towards him. He was with us until quite recently, and I am free to confess his loss was not more deplored by Ethel than myself. Now, to my knowledge, the children love each other exceedingly; and the boy has gone away bearing with him this one choice secret

to encourage his endeavour, and brighten his dark beginning. It is quite as well for the sake of his happiness that he does not know of the powerful rival whose fascination can cause my poor girl to so soon forget the companion of her own age. At this point, when his first priceless dream is in such peril, and he cannot plead for himself, I do so for him. I have told Ethel what is due to the honour of her girlhood's friendship; I venture to leave with you what is due to the honour of the stronger influence."

LORD N. (*very astonished, yet in spite of his mortification admiring the spirit*). "This is a great grief to me. I am almost breathless with surprise, and if your chivalry did not wound me to the death, I would warmly commend it; but of course I cannot do that" (*lugubriously*).

DOCTOR (*cordially*). "Why not? Be worthy of your noble self——"

LORD N. (*impatiently breaking upon his remark*). "That's just it—my noble self—and so is likely to remain. But, seriously, is not your interest Quixotic—more so than paternal?"

DOCTOR (*contentedly*). "Very likely. If there were more of such innovations it would be as well."

LORD N. (*who cannot see it*). "I don't know; there's a revolutionary savour about it that is not pleasant. I never met with such a thing in my life before. Had Ethel's indifference to my love influenced you, I could the more readily have entered into the course you have adopted."

DOCTOR (*with slight severity*). "There is a standard of right to follow, and neither indifference nor prepossession affects it. Ethel has been entranced by your kind attention, flattered by its exclusiveness, and so captivated by the charm of your society she does not know whether she is on her head or her heels; and it is my duty to tell her."

LORD N. (*who thinks this mildly vulgar*). "Pray do not let me be the cause of unpleasantness. I'm sure (*distantly*) I should much regret crossing your theories, which are probably superior to my own. I must, of course, (*more coolly*) accept the resolution you have arrived at. I could have wished it otherwise. The discontinuance of Ethel's visits to the Priory

will throw quite a cloud upon my life, yet it would be cruel to both if they went on. I should not have built so exclusively upon such improbable happiness. I knew that the presence of the school imperilled my chance, but certainly did not suppose I should find yourself supporting some youthful attachment. To say the least of it, the procedure is unusual."

DOCTOR (*thoughtfully, and a little sadly*). "It would have been more in accordance with modern ideas had I gratefully and gladly accepted your lordship's hand for my daughter, and have bade her put away childish attachment with other childish things. I might have done so, had her affection chosen any but the boy it did; as it is, I am convinced she cannot do better, though wealth and honours shower upon her to a bewildering extent" (*firmly, yet with emotion*).

LORD N. (*after an interval of silence, during which he has reflected deeply*). "The vagaries of parents are, I know, unaccountable; but refusal to form an alliance with a family like the Nugents would take most people by surprise. In spite of my chagrin I admit your example is, if singular, disinterested; possibly it improves my esteem, while it wounds my love. Yet I should not say this; the love I experience can never be wounded. Ethel will always reign supreme in my heart whatever the scheme of her future" (*with a trembling voice*).

DOCTOR (*whom his lordship's emotion affects*). "You will scarcely credit me with feeling exceedingly distressed on your behalf. I do sympathize with you, however, very much; and nothing but long deliberation and a high sense of right should have led me to inflict this pain. If I am acting in what may seem an eccentric manner, it is, I believe, judiciously done and for the best. In the problem presented to me, humanity espouses the weakest side, and I am but travelling upon lines laid down long since. I became the boy's good friend, and so will remain through life. I would give him much, and the dearest thing I possess: in giving him Ethel, I do that."

LORD N. (*having listened calmly, but with gradually increasing recognition of Dr Virgil's noble motive*). "I appreciate the warmth of your affection for the boy, although at my

own expense. I am peculiar myself in some of my hobbies, so dare not define to any man the length he should go in respecting the dictates of his soul. I do most earnestly hope the boy may turn out worthy of your broad interest in his welfare. The tone in which you speak of him charms me; tenderness is usually qualified by sentiment,—it is the more precious when so spontaneous. The odds and ends of jangling music about us are the keynotes of our happiness or misery, few know so well how to tune them into order. For Ethel, I can but say that all my life was hers, and that I in no sense withdraw my love, or my wish for our union, if circumstances should influence you to change your decision" (*rising and holding out his hand with frank cordiality*).

DOCTOR (*grasping it with warmth, feeling relieved the unpleasant interview has terminated thus amicably*). "Thank you, my lord. And I on my side wish for no breaking off of our friendship; I would rather have so good an understanding cement it the firmer. There shall be no reserve nor formality if I can help it, and I shall exercise no restraint upon Ethel. Having stated my views and opinions to each of you, they are safely left in your respective hands."

LORD N. (*who thinks this out-Herods the Platonic altogether, and is an essentially disagreeable arrangement*). "It strikes me this is awfully like playing with fire: it might be pleasant enough for Ethel, but fiendishly unpleasant for me."

DOCTOR (*with regret at having proposed it*). "You find it impossible to bestow friendship where you have given love."

LORD N. (*hotly*). "Of course I do. And so I should think must any one who has truly loved. Friendship is a very good thing in its way, but not when it is compounded of the dregs and bitter leavings of love. Better the impassable gulf, the great wide distance, cruel and dark" (*with intense dejection*).

DOCTOR (*cheerfully, unable from a higher standpoint to take the view*). "I am sorry for this gloomy turn. Time will subdue your grief, a result of impetuous melancholy following upon your disappointment. You underrate the value of friendship succeeding even to love. In my opinion, friendship is the purest sentiment of the two, and the least

selfish: it is a stronger affection; it will outlast love in the majority of instances, because friendship is of the soul, while love is pre-eminently of the senses."

LORD N. (*who thinks his opinion pedantic*). "Well, Doctor Virgil, I will return to my studio; thanking you for courtesy and sympathy. Good day, sir, good day" (*they shake hands in a very friendly manner, without encountering each other's eyes, and his lordship carefully avoids looking to the right or the left as he passes out*).

It had not been such very smooth sailing after all; indeed Lord Lawrence thought it a diabolical wreck, and he was glad enough to be quit of Hillsland harbour. Diplomacy itself was nothing to it!

"I hope Gascoyne will get on better than this with his affair," he said to himself, drearily.

Like Lady Nugent, he had a weakness for having things his own way, and with the straitened liberality often associated with seclusion and ideality, really thought he ought to have them so. This refusal, not to say rebuff, discomfited his dainty lordship terribly; and even the charmingly negligent interior known as his studio failed to readjust that proper tone and equable artistic calmness so necessary to good work and to contentment.

Her portrait was to be seen upon all sides, introduced into the daintiest of his gems, flushing beauty alike upon classical and modern compositions. He went carefully from one to another, collecting them, placing some in portfolios, locking others away, and making a great clean sweep of Ethel Virgil.

Then he thought the place looked desolate. It did not, of course: there was no more sumptuous interior among the studios of the aristocracy: luxury blended with rarity in the most elegant sense imaginable: a cheerful fire, lending more ruby hue to the rich carpet and curtains, relieved it of any desolateness. But it seemed so to him; changed, blank as a strange apartment, cold, forbidding, and unkind.

He uncovered one of her portraits again, and looked askance at it; then uneasily edging round tables and easels until in full front of it, he took a hard unflinching look, such (he

was rehearsing) as one might direct at a stranger to become a friend. He did not get on very well; the hard look softened to a fond one, such as might not be bestowed upon a stranger even when become a friend.

Leisurely he took another portrait from the portfolio and replaced it upon the easel of honour, trying the effect of those two and finding them agree better with him than the desolateness; and unlocking another, which he put back in its old position on the mantelpiece, thus restoring her. And it must be confessed that Ethel Virgil restored looked not less lovely than before. A grave, handsome fellow in years, he ought to have known better. It was that secluded life of his, that always dangerous system of living apart and dreaming alone. And now he was in a pretty pickle! He knew it well enough, and only wished he could see his way out of it. How her eyes haunted him, confidently looking up to him, almost with devotion, and with the rapt intensity of some exquisite disciple gazing upon her mentor and her friend!

Midst of which came a peremptory tap at the door. He understood that commanding signal immediately, and arose with haste to admit his honoured lady diplomatist. Standing there haughtily beautiful, empress-like and grand, with august stateliness, she was holding by the hand a certain coy little maiden, who stood back with exquisite shyness. His mother had never before so fairly taken him by surprise in her wildest freaks of negotiation; and he leaned an arm on a marble column, looking at them with something of consternation.

"Hoity-toity!" she exclaimed; "this is ingratiating. A frigid greeting to our embassy. But let us enter, young lady, and account for our presence here." Entering as she spoke, the Dowager Lady Nugent looked importantly conscious of being able to account for the same in a perfectly satisfactory manner. Lord Lawrence placed his own luxurious arm-chair for the comfort of her ladyship, adjusting cushions, a footstool, the fire-screen, drawing a curtain to ward off any rebel draught, and placing a low table near. It was a custom of the lady's, or had been during her long ministry, to lay one

of the exquisite waxen hands on a table near her, while she issued her dictates.

Lord Lawrence, with kindly effort to forget past sorrowful experience, shook hands with Miss Virgil, placed a chair for her accommodation to the left of her ladyship, and took up his station on the right. Lady Nugent was immensely particular as to the etiquette of place.

The Dowager would not have filled a throne with more consummate grace. Turning slightly, and at her most perfect leisure, she addressed his lordship. "This child, who has not a word to say for herself here, came to me an hour ago, pleading for an interview in private; this I granted, and heard from her own lips that a Nugent had been fool enough to submit to a defeat. Now, in my opinion, for such craven policy there can be no redress. Had you played your cards aright, and pressed the advantage you manifestly enjoyed, after gaining our consent to the alliance, you might have achieved success for your mission; but to retreat like a renegade before the *bourgeoisie* is horrible! To be baffled by the pretexts and specious plausibilities of the line of argument adopted by Doctor Virgil is such a bungling miscontrivance and utterly wretched blunder, we felt called upon for our honour's sake to take the matter up at once, and have therefore come to you upon an envoyship of conciliation; and you may thank your stars that Providence conferred the grant of diplomacy upon your mother."

"That I certainly will, dear mother, if it gain me this hoped-for treasure;" glancing towards the blushing girl, who herself looked uncommonly happy.

"A truce to this nonsense, which has nothing to do with it!" cried her ladyship, impatiently. "You, *my* son, found yourself frustrated, and allowed yourself to be routed: if such a disgraceful dilemma was not in need of sharp action, I don't know of anything that ever was: but I tell you candidly I would have left it to the contempt it deserved had it not been for the consent you solicited and gained, and which of course enlists my lasting interest. Having once espoused a cause, Lawrence, I never in my life abandon it; at the same time,

had you all the integrity of Aristides, I would not believe in you contrary to my convictions, and certainly not help you contrary to my principles. Those principles are violently opposed to being worsted, foiled, and beaten, by any adversary. And when Nugent Priory capitulates, by treaty, or articles, or howsoever you surrender, eating humble-pie any way, it is high time somebody came to the relief. You know very well I did not care a quill for the connection; but having taken it up, by St George and the Dragon, I won't lay it down again!"

Lady Nugent, leaning back in her chair with great perturbation, and a lovely colour on her cheeks, looked anything but a bad ally. Fearful and wonderful were her tactics, but once in a way their obstinacy proved acceptable. Up to the present moment Lord Lawrence had sat in quivering curiosity as to the meaning of this unexpected change in the situation; and much he longed to hear how it had come about, but he knew of old experience that her ladyship would never permit questions to be put to her—all must be elucidated at her own supreme leisure.

At that leisure she explained.

"The draft of Ethel Virgil's communication begins with the narration of your visit, and I remark a flaw at the outset. Why did you not have the girl in and put the question point-blank to herself? It appears that after you had gone her father sensibly did so, detailing the purpose of your interview. With an admirable resolution I cannot sufficiently commend, she firmly told him that, whatever youthful affection she had entertained, as regards the future her heart was wholly your own. At the parting with her companion she honourably told him of her love for yourself; a kind and thoughtful step, characterized by honest solicitude, and not performed, I have reason to know, without sorrow, for they were fondly attached. Her father was not aware of this perfectly fair understanding until to-day, when for your sake Ethel related it. Taking the details consecutively, Doctor Virgil next very properly advised her to come here and place me in possession of the facts, leaving me to act as arbitratrix, if such an intermediary course

appeared prudent. Our young friend performed this delicate office without affectation on the one hand or effrontery on the other: she was a little diffident, and very modest, but not in the least nonsensical. Altogether my good opinion of Ethel Virgil has largely increased."

"So has mine," said his lordship, quietly, looking his loving gratitude.

"Now," continued her ladyship, "not to half perform my errand, and to ratify its object, I would propose an early wedding for your consideration. It seems to me, having accepted its tenor, the sooner it is carried out the better. Dilatoriness impeaches sincerity, always. And to you, my dear (turning kindly to the girl), I may simply repeat Seneca's grand old words, 'Philosophy does not look into pedigrees; she did not adopt Plato as noble, but she made him such.'"

Rising slowly, and as the girl thought with majesty, holding her hand for the pretty lips to kiss, the Dowager could not have worn more proud dignity had the glory of Blenheim, Oudenarde, Ramillies, and Malplaquet shone upon her.

Offering his arm, Lord Lawrence with fine respect escorted his mother to the door, thanking her there for the good service rendered him. More like a charming page than a lady of the court, Ethel followed in the old lady's rear, exchanging an exquisite glance with his lordship as she passed, and looking back from the corridor so sweetly it wellnigh brought him literally to her feet.

And after this pretty comedy was over, and he was again alone with his musings, his dreams, his paintings of her; how changed all seemed! What sunniness and warmth had descended! The ruby richness around glowed with a deeper splendour; the view of the College from the window no longer smote with benumbing pain—it looked quite a comfortable, cheering-coloured edifice; he saw some of the boys—he would have treated them all round to tarts until they staggered. He restored all her portraits, proud of her, for she was heroic and compassionate as well as being the most lovable of darlings; and he dropped a hurried line to his friend Gascoyne:—

It's all right. We've had some skirmishing, but by a magnificent coup of Ethel's have carried the day. I know you congratulate me. I hope soon to have the happiness of congratulating you.

Whatever Lady Nugent's faults of peculiarity, when she became a partisan it was to become a friend, in the best sense of that word. With the wedding of her eldest son she had had nothing to do, and she never forgave him in consequence. Into that of Lord Lawrence it was evident she intended throwing her best energy and all that genius for contrivance and interference in which she pre-eminently gloried.

As it was to receive her special countenance, Lady Nugent determined that the wedding should be a grand one, in contradistinction to that of Lord Nugent which had not been under her special countenance, and was, she affirmed, a scandal to the county. Having thus resolved, her ladyship would have the affianced one hourly in her company; while the staff of those intrusted with the preparation of Ethel's *trousseau* quite bewildered the simple-minded, sensible girl, who would much have preferred a simple and sensible wedding. But this would have outraged all the Dowager's traditions, and deprived her of counter-plotting that designing body *par excellence*, the fashionable caterers for fashionable weddings—a fastidious body of folk if obsequious. And much did the vagaries of her ladyship startle them; for Lady Nugent was not more particular about what she said to tradespeople than to others, and very plainly told the extensive *artistes* what she thought of them, and how clearly she saw through their crafty goings-on. It slightly disorganised the combination of skill and talent, but by one of her master-strokes of propitiatory stratagem, she effected a *rapprochement*, and all went smoothly again.

Doctor Virgil kept his thoughts to himself. He had raised no further objection and placed no other obstacle in the way. He felt compelled to assent since Ethel herself had said that her happiness depended upon it. This thoughtful and feeling man, so tender-hearted under all the exact manner, analyst

of youth with its hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows, was confounded by the artless behaviour of his own daughter.

The Doctor's maiden sisters in London were informed of what was going on, and they wrote their congratulations. Something had always told them, they said, their niece would some day form a brilliant alliance. They were not surprised, after the careful bringing up and personal cultivation of her attainments by her father. They felt sure she was worthy of the station to which it had pleased Providence to call her; and they begged to enclose one worked cosy, a pair of watch-pockets, two pairs of knitted sleeping socks, a braided comb-and-brush bag, one kettle-holder each for housekeeper's room and parlour, a pin-cushion, a Japanese tray, and one slipper—done many years ago, adding that they would set to immediately and finish the other.

Having been silent so long, the inherent goodness of heart thus manifested was profoundly affecting, and Doctor Virgil looked upon the collection with emotion.

How becoming were Ethel's actions, how agreeable her method of filling up the time, without putting on airs of importance, or feeling made much of, or the centre of all the bustle; her quietness was the quietness of well-behaved girlhood, and no rank to which she could be elevated presented more beautiful conduct. His lordship appreciated her attitude more highly than any demeanour yet approved by him. So young, it might not have been looked for, but from first to last Ethel was all that he would have wished, and promised to add grace as well as goodness to the traditions of the Ladies Nugent.

And when the day came, fair with the fragrant riches of the spring-time, it seemed to shed a blessing on their union. By desire of Lady Nugent the ceremony was performed at the Priory; nevertheless the bells of Leamington rang out their cheeriest, and many a kind heart wished joy to the Doctor's pretty daughter. And pretty she looked in her bridal gear, while light through the old stained windows lent delicate hues and smiled radiant tints! Lord Gascoyne had been invited to the wedding, but forwarded an apology with a costly gift.

On ordinary occasions her ladyship was too much for him; what she would be on this he could not conceive. Lady Nugent tossed his apology into the fire. "Thank Heaven we are spared that infliction!" she said, looking at herself complacently in the mirror. Doctor Virgil, of course, was present, or rather as much of the Doctor as her ladyship deigned to recognize. That worthy man was low-spirited at losing Ethel; as usual he *felt* more than any one knew of—it was his destiny to suffer thus; some are so constituted. He had no resource but to bury himself in his books, and cover depression with discipline; and the boys said the Doctor was more stern than ever. It is the fate of many to be disliked for some semblance, worn to keep under fine emotions that might else provoke ridicule or contempt. A mere machine may have hidden springs of an exquisite temper, and how soon such are injured!

* * * * *

Away in the Great City was a young life buffeting, full of pain with the first struggle, apart in its lonely and sensitive conflict; and this tenderer soul dwelt with fond remembrance on those especial traits, both understood and loved.

CHAPTER XIV.

THUS FAR AND NO FURTHER.

ARTHUR PENRYLLON went for his boxes, and the cabman must have been much impressed when he helped him up-stairs with them. After the front door had closed on the man, and Arthur stood in the dirty passage alone, looking shyly around at the desolateness disclosed by the flickering candle, he verily realized the wretched lot which had befallen him. He had noticed when coming in that there was not one single light at any one single window up or down the entire length of Shark Street, and the fancy took possession of him that he would not only be alone in the house but alone in the street, so little sign was there of anything human remaining in that enlivening quarter after business hours. He had locked the side door which opened to the office, and did not need to go in there; so he went up-stairs again, and dismal though it was, felt relief on reaching the bedroom, the door of which he closed, and then standing by the window looked out upon the prospect offered. He saw a line of back windows of the parallel street, and lights at some of them; because of this, he put one box upon the other and sat there, feeling more in the track of humanity. The people of that street, probably aware of the deserted line of dwellings in their rear, had not troubled, very many of them, to put their own blinds down, or possibly they had adopted the plan of Boggis and Blim and dispensed with them altogether; anyway, these interiors were bared to the boy's view with novel, if not with attractive features of interest, and he sat a long time learning London by night, so far as it could be learnt from the observatory at Boggis and Blim's.

A girl with quick fingers employed at needlework; the candle was close to her face and he could see how pale she was. She seemed troubled with a racking cough or some pain that broke interruptingly upon her work; she put her hand up to the window as though she felt a draught from it and moved further back, the movement exposing a bed whereon there was evidently a sleeper, for she sometimes looked towards it while her work was laid down as with weariness.

At another window men were seen engaged upon some leather-work: one leaning over a board cut out the texture deftly, which another punctured; while a third apportioned the pieces thus prepared to some ornamental use: it was performed swiftly and with dexterity. In another part of the room a woman sat nursing a baby and drinking from a pewter-can.

Below this room was one in which a large family of children were being bundled promiscuously into their beds, stretched out, side by side, upon the floor. It seemed a gaunt, hard-dealing woman who thrust them hither and thither, and having performed her duty as quickly and roughly as possible, she bounced out with her candle, sparks flying in the darkness, the children left with sparks, blows, and grumbling to their poor little lot alone.

In one of the other rooms he could see an old woman crooning over a cradle brought up near the fire; she rocked it every now and then, her head shaking with age, and tired waiting, probably, for the mother of the child. She paid no heed to its crowing and extending of little arms,—she was too senile, too occupied with her aches and pains.

At the house adjoining he saw a man and woman seated at a table playing with cards. The man was smoking a long pipe, and every now and then puffed the smoke in the woman's face, whereat she laughed coarsely. A clear glass bottle was between them, and to it they paid their respects repeatedly. Presently there was a quarrel, for the man dashed his pipe violently upon the floor, while the woman threw the pack of cards at him. Then came blows, knocking over of chairs and tables, bursting open of the door by a man who entered and

parted them, and then drew down the blind, when the boy transferred his sickened gaze to another window and another scene, but so different. A young man, little more than a youth, sat carving ivory or bone, done delicately, it was evident, by the close application, nice skill, and peculiar movement of the hands. Close by, reading aloud, yet often watching intently, was a girl of about his own age, pretty, but wan and ill-looking. The marked fondness, the slight movements of gentle consideration, and the keen, quiet work, were defined clearly; it interested the watcher and he felt sorry when the craftsman put away his tools while the girl drew the curtain. But even on that were flowers; how the poor must bless cheap chintz which will garland their rooms and hang a picture on the ugly walls!

The boy sadly looked out until, one by one, the lights died away,—until moonlight stole down the walls and made the windows shine anew,—until the sky above was fleecy, and of a light luminous blue that reminded him of Ethel's lovely eyes;—then thinking of her, he turned to his cheerless room again, shivering with cold, shuddering before its blank discomfort.

It was so cold, and clothing on the bed was so thin and scanty that he would not undress, but decided to rest upon it as he was, overcoat and all. First he knelt down at his boxes and said his prayers, making mention of his late loved master tearfully, breathing Ethel's name with much softness, and his good friend Herrick's with a sensitive fondness that would have thrilled George could he have heard.

The bed was hard as the floor, and miserable as could be. The boy was unable to get to sleep; and by the time the moon veered round and sent a streak of light upon the floor, he was still awake. Watching this line, pale as a garden-walk in ghostland, he was frightened to see creatures scamper across; the Boggis and Blim troop of rats were abroad on their nightly survey; and the boy, with shocked loathing, sat up in an agony of distress. His unutterable wretchedness caused a choking sensation, and his heart beat terribly. What a dreadful place it was! Worse even than he had supposed possible

upon first seeing it. The perspiration beaded his forehead, while his ears tingled under the sound of the pattering feet. He could not, would not, remain there any longer, yet felt afraid of his life of putting a foot out of the door. He had taken his boots off; and with these in his hand he now hurriedly quitted the room, stepping so lightly as scarcely to disturb even the noxious company. He stood out upon the landing, and did not know what to do. It was shadowy and dark; the little light coming in by the staircase-window only made the gloom upon either side more dense. He fled past, down the stairs, intent upon reaching the level with the street, with half a mind to walk up and down outside all night. Then it occurred to him to try the office; it would be warmer, more closed in, and safer. He went to the door, finding it, to his consternation, ajar, and a faint light inside; and this so surprised him he could only stand and look, while no little wonderment possessed him. Upon the stool before the desk was perched a singular being, unlike any Master Penryllon had ever seen, and outlined in such vague and indistinct colouring it seemed to the boy's distempered fear a phantom. Motionless, inclined over the desk with the lantern in front of him, an intent cast, with all its indefiniteness, lending form to the pale face, it was absorbed in some occupation. For an instant Penryllon fancied he had been looking too long at the moonlight up-stairs, and had come down with its effect still in his eyes; but the open door, that lantern—could it be that there was some other occupant of the place, then? Or was it some midnight visitant to haunted chambers? This ghastly thought forced him to enter and resolve all doubts. The being who had affrighted him gave a guilty start, and hastily covered his employment with his hand; and as innocence is superior to guile any night, the intruder recovered his courage. It was that goblin Timothy Figg, who, believing the office vacated, and likewise the premises, had admitted himself surreptitiously, with the object of pursuing an undertaking commenced some time ago. Piece by piece he was accumulating evidence that would really suspend that industrious pair, his former employers, if they did not look out. He now turned and examined

the pretty mortal before him with intense curiosity, while the thought that it might be a new clerk so excited his risible faculties that he broke out into a low relishing gurggle, which to him might represent a laugh, but which to Penryllon sounded strange and horrible.

"Who are you?" he asked, but stared with such ghastly green eyes Master Penryllon was in no way reassured; answering, however, quickly, and in a tone of voice intended to be respectfully conciliatory:

"If you please, I am come to be articted to Messrs Boggis and Blim."

"Well, I hope you like Messrs Boggis and Blim," said Timothy, mocking his voice.

"No, I do not," said Arthur, "nor anything about them."

"Take my advice, and don't tell them so, then. They're a queer couple when put out."

"Do you live here?" asked Arthur, edging a pace nearer, yearning with all his heart for a little friendliness.

"I used to."

"What! Are you the boy who ate the venetian blinds?" looking at Mr Figg with dismay. That worthy knitted his drab brows.

"Another libel!" And he brought his thumb down menacingly on his occupation. "Come here," he said; and the other went to him, Timothy holding up the lantern to obtain a good look. "A pretty one you are, sure enough—far too pretty to waste away here. Listen to me, sir. I know what they are. They will stop at nothing; no, not even at murder!" Gradually Arthur's large eyes opened wider with dread and terror. He had not thought over-favourably of his masters, but not quite so badly as that. The ex-clerk combed his hair with his quill-pen, and solemnly gave the boy this startling assurance: "I was with them for a long time, and pretty nearly during the whole of it was engaged in unravelling their villany; and I haven't done yet. I've let myself into this place to-night out of quite a contrary feeling to love for them. Many a time I've bin knocked off this stool; everything you see afore you has bin hurled at me in turn; it's

black and blue I've been times out o' number; sworn at, under-paid, and starved;—and soon will come my reckoning day, when the little balance will be settled. I tells you this out o' friendliness, and because I see the sort of a chap you are—no pluck to resist, and no strength to endure it, as I did."

Arthur listened to this strange address with mingled feelings of gratitude and doubt. Mr Figg's appearance was not prepossessing, and his manner anything but ingratiating. The fact of his being there was opposed to all Arthur's theories of right—his employment was suspicious; and while the boy's sensitive appreciation of the other's interest led him to feel thankful, his innate honour caused him to reject such a summary of his employers' character. It would be quite soon enough to believe it of them if he discovered it in his own experience. The life and soul of everything to Arthur Penryllon was obedience, and the most repugnant thing disobedience. His masters might be very bad; but to believe so before it was proved savoured of treachery, and he would have none of it. As for "pluck," as his friend on the stool called it, he knew quite well the calibre of his heroism. Brave with fine innocence, bold with his own soft Saxon speech, courageous with truth, he yet was very lacking in the science of fisticuffs, and had never been fashioned by nature for a bull-dog.

"Your recommendation is not encouraging," he said, with a pleasing smile, which caused Mr Figg to stare with grim satisfaction at the superiority of his knowledge.

"Take my advice, and clear out," said Timothy. "I'll even help you with your things, if you will."

Arthur shook his head. "That would not be right. I have had no cause given me as yet."

"Well, when you know 'em better you won't stand upon delicacy as to the suddenness. My only fear is that they'll finish you off afore you can contrive to make your escape."

It seemed to be the boy's fate that he should have advice offered warring with his finer principles. He recalled Herrick's counsel. There almost seemed some interposition in it; and he felt very unsettled and unhappy. How much he wished that he could go to his kind friend Dr Virgil in this emer-

gency, and abide by what he said was best! As he could not do so, he relied upon what he thought was best.

Mr Figg merely drew up his shoulders, pursed up his lips, and turned himself pityingly on his stool. If the new-comer wouldn't be helped, he must be left to his fate.

Without taking further notice of him, Timothy proceeded with the inquiry he was prosecuting, and for an hour devoted himself to it with great assiduity. Penryllon meanwhile sitting down on a chest, and watching his application with surprise,—first at his coolness as a trespasser, and next at his industry as a young man of apparently sluggish temperament.

"I think that'll do it," said Timothy at length, smacking his lips. "I've made such an exact survey, take it altogether, it strikes me it'll put a stop to surveying in this part."

The boy's head had been nodding drowsily—he was very tired. Starting at Figg's exclamation, he saw that his work was completed, and wondered what he would do next. He jumped from his seat, alert and agile as most people are in the middle of the day, and replaced the documents which he had been dissecting, then turned jerkily to Master Penryllon. "Good night, youngster! Please yourself about telling 'em I've been here. They'll know who it is if you describe; and, my weskit-buttons, won't there be a flare up?" With which singular *finale* Mr Timothy Figg departed, and Arthur was left alone again. He once more fastened up, not, however, feeling over secure after the late example; and, with a candle alight for company, on the stool vacated, with arms outspread on the desk and his pretty head resting upon them, he fell asleep.

That part ended there, and happily; he dreamt of Ethel.

The chilly morning light crept in through the shutter-chinks, and the place looked horribly grim and cold; but even that dead light did not rob the cheek upon which it fell of the delicate bloom never absent, and invariably more beautiful during slumber. The curls, tossed and tumbled, fell away from the brow upon the desk. He moved, sighed—clattering of a milk-cart along the street awoke him—he sat up, cramped, shivering, mournful, then shook himself, stood down,



walked about to set the circulation right, opened the shutters, and drew up the blind, scaring an old woman opposite who was sweeping her steps.

Then this happened—great is the mystery of humanity: a tall thin young girl, rather awkward of movement and evidently shy about her mission, ambled along Shark Street, pranced before the steps at Boggis and Blim's, and made a bolt up them, ringing the office-bell; and much the old woman opposite wondered, while she leaned on her broom and stared, for the young person carried something under a cloth, and was mighty particular to see it came to no grief. Master Penryllon went to the door, and opened his splendid eyes so largely at the apparition that Miss Tottles (who was an admirer of boys' eyes) opened her own, and stared without speaking. When she found her tongue, she somewhat irregularly explained. "He's been round the first thing, and catches I a-blackening the stove, and begged I'd leave it to fry a bit o' fish, and make some coffee, to bring along to you, with some bread and butter; 'cause, he said, you'd be feeling cold and hungry."

Arthur blushed before Miss Tottles's hospitable energy. He guessed he was indebted to his nocturnal friend for the thoughtfulness, and thanked the girl warmly for her kindness.

"Let me put 'em in your kitchen, I know where 'tis, and then I can take my things back again." Saying which, Miss Tottles stalked past and deposited them as explained, and with a kind nod of the head ran off, Arthur looking after the apparition flitting down Shark Street, and, in spite of her dirt and untidiness, and the wild negligence of a London castaway, enlivening the deadness prevalent.

Thus introduced to the kitchen, he looked about for himself to ascertain what his employers had provided for him to live upon. He found a loaf and a half, stale; a quarter of a pound of butter, rank; a quarter of a pound of sugar, or a dense brown mixture purporting to be that; some scraps of cold meat, various and infinitely more unwholesome-looking than the present of fish; some tea screwed up in a piece of paper, and horrid coffee in an old blacking-bottle. Then the new clerk

decided he would have his meals out somewhere, economising his little fund of pocket-money (for which he was indebted chiefly to Dr Virgil) as best he could. He tried hard to look things cheerfully in the face, telling himself he would get used to it all in time, and hoping that if he did his duty diligently it would make a favourable impression on his masters, and win for him some little kindness and consideration. Full of this laudable desire he made shift with his breakfast for that day, and sat down to his work at once. The hours passed on. Boggis and Blim did not come in. He worked as conscientiously as though they had been at his elbow. He remembered Mr Blim had alluded to being away, and he wished to show them some progress made by the time they returned. Mr Figg had been by no means a bad clerk so far as calculation went, but he was destitute of neatness. The Penryllon folios were copperplate, while the system of book-keeping brought into requisition was accuracy itself.

The partners did not return all that day nor the next, but on the evening of the second they wriggled along in company, and stealthily paused outside, peering in at the window to see what the new boy was about. Arthur had but just gone out to get his tea, and not catching sight of him, Blim thought to surprise the young man idling somewhere in the house. They entered softly by a duplicate key, considerably surprised to find the door of their place of business locked, and then went on their crafty quest. They were both in the worst of bad tempers, the collapse of the garden-scheme at the Herongate, from whence they had but just returned, having made both as rusty as possible. Not finding the clerk in the house, they came to the conclusion he had gone out, and with a vindictive oath Boggis swore he'd "out" him.

"Well, I agree with you," said Blim, clenching his thin symmetrical hands, "it won't do—and he may as well be taught a lesson sooner as later!"

"Yes," grumbled Boggis; "and I'll teach it him." His partner—who stood for the prudence of the establishment—not raising any objection, he determined in his own mind the lesson should be a hard one. His palms were itching to vent

his spleen upon some one; he had meditated a row with Blim to carry it off, but this might do as well without compromising the stability of their partnership.

Arthur walked quickly back, with a *pose* air, intent on resuming work and employing the evening profitably; he thought to keep at the books after closing. The firm received him rudely for all this forethought. Boggis struck him a blow that caused him to reel and fall against Blim, who seized him by the ear and pulled him up straight again, then the brutes commenced to question him.

Arthur trembling with indignation rather than fear, with a hot face and quivering lip, confronted the pair of bullies.

"When my guardian agreed that I should come here, sirs, he did not, I am sure, give you permission to knock me about."

"Will—you—tell—us—where—you—have—been?" demanded Blim, grinding his teeth.

"Yes; to have my tea. I have not been ten minutes."

"But what the devil are you up to? Do you think clerks have time for going out to tea? Is that what you've come to London for, wasting your employers' time? But, by the Lord Harry! I'll teach you a lesson, my pretty." This was Blim. With the thin, symmetrical hands, he savagely cuffed the small pink ears till they burnt crimson. Staggering and half blinded, poor Arthur caught at the desk, when the brawny Boggis brought his doubled fist down on his back between the shoulders: the boy fell moaning, he had sunk in ineffable pain. Boggis kicked him ferociously. "Now get ye up," he shouted, "or I'll take a strap and wollop you to within an inch of your life." Blurting which, he kicked Arthur over on the other side. The boy was unable to rise, strap or no strap, and when they saw the mouth foaming, and the beautiful face distorted with pain, they grimly sat down, and viewed their work. The veins below the delicate skin were swollen and purple, perspiration beaded the white brow, the hands opened and closed with a slow convulsive movement seeking help. Blim went up to his partner very softly, and with a bland, beneficently reproachful manner, murmured,

"You are so rough ; there was no need for such violence. It's always a mistake to kick, feet are such awkward things and leave such disagreeable marks ; besides, it's not becoming to do so. I sadly fear you've put your foot in it this time." Blim stooped over the boy while Boggis slouched moodily to the door to look if anybody was likely to have seen the occurrence. There was only the old custodian of the chambers opposite, who was stooping to remove a mat from the front door after the departure of her gentlemen, and before closing. He slouched back to Blim, and with a sullen, stupid dismay, saw him lift the inanimate body, throw it over his shoulder, and egg his way out with it after a serpentine, sinuous fashion, treading the stairs with a guilty tread—mounting with swift steps as though murder were behind dogging at his heels.

"If he does get over it, I'll give him another for causing us this scare," he muttered, while placing the slight burden upon that hard miserable pallet. It lay outstretched in suffering unconsciousness of brutal usage and total friendlessness. Was ever one so utterly removed from all solicitous care, or so perilously at the mercy of ruffians? Having placed it there he left it, going out and locking the door. Upon joining his partner he found him smoking a pipe and looking stolidly insensible to their danger. "You take it coolly, you do," he said, with a discontented tone of voice.

"When I took it hot you didn't like it."

"Now, look here, Boggis," said Blim, with an uncommonly serious air ; "if anything happens to that boy, we may swing."

"Not if we know it !"

"Well, perhaps you'll point out means of escape ?"

"In the first place it ain't at all likely anything *will* happen to him: if there does, he's not so overdone with friends, that any will come along to inquire after him yet awhile ; and it ain't very likely one'll be raised up specially, is it? Well, then, you leave him up there ; don't trouble to go near the room, and I'll bet my bones his'n are picked cleanish when you do go !" And with a horrid chuckle the speaker smoked on con-



tentedly. Blim realised the hideous meaning—that the rats would remove the traces of their crime.

“One to you, partner,” said he. “And he won’t have a pleasant time of it while he’s ill.”

“You’d better drop a line to his guardian to say he’s all right, to make sure.”

“That I’ll do now, and write to the schoolmaster as well!”

He wrote the first of these notes, and read it aloud:—

DEAR SIR,—

A line to inform you that Arthur Penryllon duly arrived here on Monday. We find his progress at school has been very satisfactory, and that there is every prospect of his becoming an able writer and accountant. We have taken some pains to put him in the way of the proper performance of his duties, and we are glad to see him willing to be shown and eager to be taught. Rest assured we shall do our best to make him a credit to us and an honour to yourself. We are so pressed with business, you will excuse it if you do not hear from him for some little time. Conveying his kind and respectful remembrance and our compliments—We are, your obedient servants,

BOGGIS AND BLIM.

“But we ain’t, and never will be,” commented Boggis.

“Bah! Mere form!” The scribe then proceeded with the writing of the other. That he also read to his caustic partner:—

Messrs Boggis and Blim present their respects, and beg to communicate to Dr Virgil the safe arrival of Master Penryllon, whose careful education and general intelligence especially fit him for a professional life. From what has been seen of his capabilities, they entertain good hope of his being very useful to them, and early acquiring the prima materia of their business. He seems a delicate lad, of whom care must be

taken, and they feel glad he has fallen in their way. He is rather pleased to escape from school, where it seems he stood in unpleasant awe of yourself; but boys will be boys. He takes so happily to his duties here, and has so comfortably settled down, they think it will be unnecessary for them further to communicate with his late school.

"There, I think that'll settle them," observed Blim, "and now we're all right; one or other of us must be here all day though, while he's down. One little point, especially important in the event of anything happening to him, is not included by your conveyancing—*rats don't eat bones.*" They sat glowering at one another, and neither spoke. Blim's long fingers twisted one over the other, his long hands working out a scheme. "And they, you know," he continued smoothly, "are the most tell-tale witnesses in creation."

"Well, I ain't sentimental," Mr Boggis hoarsely remarked, "and I believe we shan't be the fust firm as has had a skeleton in the cupboard."

"Hush, my good fellow; there is no need in our profession any more than in the law to call things by names that people understand. Kindly speak of it as an irregular quotient."

"What's that?"

"An erroneous arithmetical result."

"Prove it."

"No, thank you; we don't want it proved."

"Well, leaving that, I'll toddle up to the *Friend o' Man* and have some half-and-half."

"Be careful, that's all. And I'll be getting home; he won't come to till morning, and if he does I've got the key. Tomorrow we must go into the Treasure matter again. I'm glad we stopped in Ipswich till we knew the truth of it. I don't see that things are worse than they were, since nobody's got it; and as it's removed, there's nothing to prevent anybody getting it still. That gardener's a worthy fellow; he thought he was going to get half-a-sovereign for answering my little questions, but he didn't!" And laughing heartily at the recollection,

Blim turned down the gas, locked the office and front door, and together they walked up the street, Boggis leaving his partner at the corner; turning which he nearly stumbled over a tall, good-looking girl, highly decked, who was setting forth on her evening stroll. It was Miss Tottles, and she stared with much reverence at the gentleman slouching up to the *Friend o' Man*. A great gulf of caste divides Surveyorship from Fried Fish, but surely the *Friend o' Man* should make all equal! The girl hurried on to meet her friend Timothy, whose rise in the world determined him to consummate it by the festival of a wedding, now that he had the wherewith to be married upon. The Suffolk failure did not discommode Mr Figg; he took it, as he took other things, passively, eking out the money received of Ranger with closer care, that was all. He was far too shrewd to tell Jemima about it—she might want to spend some of it on finery, and that he was much too thrifty to allow. Timothy arranged to be married on the first of January; it struck him as the proper day for beginning the struggle together. Jemima was now taking long strides for the purpose of talking matters over, darting many a hankering glance at bows of ribbon and ornaments in the shop-windows.

We leave this interesting couple alone. Returning to our poor boy, wounded and suffering, deserted in that dismal house, with disgusting creatures marshalling behind the wainscot, and all the cheerless conditions which made his bedroom a scene of horror. Lying there moaning, trying to murmur a name—that of his late master; failing, he moaned again with the trouble it caused him, being unable to frame his feeble cry. He was in sore pain, and great sorrow of mind. Things were entangled in a mesh of distress in that bruised head; cruelty and ferocity, uncouthness and injustice, tormented him like malicious gnomes; a foul fiend, wizened, a very scarecrow with its unfed agony, glared on him hungrily—he had a dim horrified consciousness it was starvation; a blackness of illimitable extent seemed opened before him like some ghastly sea without a shore, and he felt the dreadful meaning of it—he was abandoned!

What next? Will the friendly clerk come again this night?

or some strong arm of our law interpose, and save him? or one of the accidents which dog the guilty lead to the exposure of this crime, the rushing of shocked humanity up to this chamber of slaughter? The boy has no mother: think how she had loved him; will not her bright spirit be drawn from yonder skies to help? That tender, sensitive man too, who loves him so—great mercy, will no power warn him? No, no, no; all night he lies there moaning, half unconscious; the tongue that had only spoken truth all his few sad days parching for water within the sweet mouth that was now as a rim of fire; the form that had always spelt a poem of purity and loveliness writhing in awful tension; the hands, girl-soft, and subtle with gentleness, convulsively warding off the blows that all night seemed to descend like a hail of devils' hoofs; this is 'Beauty,' at whom fierce rats couch staring, only kept off by the nervous hands battling with the frosty air.

All night.

At nine o'clock the next morning Blim unlocked the door and entered, finding him conscious and very ill; no complaint on the lips, but a look of such wonderful sadness in the eyes, it made even that hard-hearted hypocrite quail and feel uncomfortable. So may a lingering life reproach, more bitterly than death with all its marble, solemn, silent vengeance!

For their own sakes the firm would rather he got over it if he would; but as for calling in a doctor or putting themselves to any trouble to procure anything for him, it was not in the nature of either to do so.

Blim's address was not helpful to recovery. "Well, sir, we hope you've made your mind up to be a better boy: we were sorry to inflict chastisement upon you thus early, but you've the consolation of knowing you brought it upon yourself, and that unless you mend it will without doubt be repeated. Neither Mr Boggis nor myself are gentlemen to be trifled with; you can't cheek us as you did that fool of a schoolmaster."

The boy put up his hand; then with an imploring look he feebly begged, "You may beat me again, rather than speak so of him."

"Certainly, so soon as you're well enough to bear it—and before that, if you come any airs or pretend to be worse than you are."

He might have been moved to pity, so patient and resigned, yet suffering, did Arthur look.

"But we want you to get well quickly, and return to your place in the office."

"No; I will leave you as soon as ever I can walk," said the boy, firmly.

"I rather think you won't, for I'll keep you locked in here, bringing you the books to do; and we'll give you a drubbing every day they're not done."

The boy simply turned wearily and painfully. The man had brought him a hunch of bread-and-butter, but he took it away again for his obstinacy, as he called it. The boy did not think it much loss either. He would have given anything for an orange, or even a glass of water.

They did not go near him again for some hours. Then Boggis went lumbering up, dashing the door open, and walking over the floor with the delicacy of a bison. He carried an end of rope in his hand which he swung playfully over the sleeper's head, for he had sunk into the painful sleep of long exhaustion.

"Shamming are you?" said the bison, with a savage roar, bringing the rope down with fury upon the quivering limbs. The sufferer opened his eyes in deadly terror; with plaintive faintness he prayed for mercy, at least until he felt a little better. "Mr Blim told me you were pretending to be worse, and I've stepped up to take it out of you."

He might do what he would, the poor child could not answer him; but while looking at the brute, in speechless agony, the eyes became glazed, and Boggis saw that he was insensible. "That fool Blim's doing all he can to stop the boy getting through it," he said, and hurled the rope up in a corner, then going down to Blim recounted the result. There was some flat beer in a pewter; Blim poured it into a mug, and took it and the bread-and-butter up-stairs. It was the extent of their kindness that day. For several days

afterwards, the boy was left to the tender mercies of Boggis alone, and Boggis as a nurse may be better imagined than described. Blim had gone back to Suffolk. He had decided upon a careful examination of the woods of the Herongate estate. He believed the mass of treasure had been removed to one of those secluded, almost inaccessible retreats, where the thickly-timbered fastness afforded every facility for a secure hiding-place. His investigation, however, was not to be proceeded with undisturbed, for he crossed paths with the supernatural-looking Ranger whose passion for the bosky thickets had by no means abated. The same idea had occurred to that solemn person, and he swore at the oaks because he had not thought of it before, instead of being so simple as to suppose the Treasure would be hidden under one isolated, particular tree, on an open lawn in good view of twenty windows at the least. Then he laughed at his own sapless wit, and set out on a grand exploration of the Herongate woods, and thus crossed paths with the intelligent Blim making a guarded survey of the Herongate dead leaves and cones and moss and all the soft deposit of centuries. He did not make much out of it, and returned to Boggis with a saturnine discontent, and a provoking dryness of ill-temper that exasperated Boggis directly he saw him; and between the two of them, the poor invalid lingering up-stairs had a more wretched time than ever. There were intervening gleams that brightened the weariness of the long illness—as, for instance, when he thought of Ethel and her father, and when the bold brave face of Herrick was vividly before him. But it was a sad, disconsolate, immeasurably painful time, stretching beyond days and over weeks, until a month or more had passed, and still their victim had not doomed them by his death. True, life was but feebly flickering, his hours might almost be numbered, yet he lived still.

Not one kind word or look or deed had helped to keep life there. Providence, however, does not permit every frail life to be extinguished by the demons hedging it in; and this fairest of young lives yet existed to redeem His promise of caring for the children.

Upon the twenty-eighth day of January, at ten o'clock in the morning, a stalwart artisan walked briskly down Shark Street and entered at Boggis and Blim's. There was honest sturdiness about his gait, and a frank cheerfulness in his look which was very different to the generality of the presentments seen in Shark Street. He was, as usual, pressed for time, yet evidently had some kind mission, for his pleasant smile lighted up Boggis and Blim's as he entered; but it quickly vanished on entering the office, when he saw the pair. Their evil faces were too plainly stamped upon his memory to be mistaken. He was greatly surprised that his steps had led him to their den, of all the dens of London. Not more so, however, than were they, and their guilty consciences were sharp upon them. At their desk, engaged with paper and quills at some of their dirty work, they looked up with blank stupor changing to rude incivility. Boggis spoke: "You're the damned workman who goes about the country insulting gentlemen. You ain't wanted here." He rolled off the stool and advanced threateningly and blusteringly towards the workman. The workman knocked him down without remark. The bully, cowed, scowling, but quiet, slowly got up. Mr Blim, tickling the side of his nose with the feather end of his quill (he enjoyed the discomfiture of Mr Boggis exceedingly) politely inquired, "Perhaps Mr Weir will enlighten us respecting the object of this visit?"

"Certainly," said Mr Weir with coolness, and he at once did so. "A friend of mine writing to me from New York, asks me as a particular favour to oblige him by calling on you, to see the schoolmate of a friend of his who is employed here, and ascertain for myself that he is well cared for, in good health, and happy in his employment; failing which, I am asked to alter it. That is what I am here for."

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Blim glided up the stairs instantly to act upon it.

Unlocking the bedroom door he hurried to the side of the inanimate boy. No knock on the head was wanted, he was still, calm, and cold, and the wretch started.

He threw off the clothing of the bed, caught the feet in the bag, and drew it up round the body and over the head, which he pushed roughly down to gather the string: then he swung it over his shoulder and glided down-stairs.

At the bottom the way was barred by the man who had called to see Arthur Penryllon. He had been over the basement and back offices and was on the way to the upper storeys. He stood full in the way of the man descending, and looked at him with that look one or two others had found awfully penetrating and accusing. He saw him carrying that bag, and believed it connected with his business. Blim put on an air of damaged innocence, as though indignant at the

search to which their premises were being subjected. And Saul Weir stood aside to let him pass.

He did so with quite a jaunty air. At the same moment a groan proceeded from the burden he carried, and Saul's susceptible ears heard it. He turned with an absolutely scared expression of countenance, and before Blim had the power to escape, laid a hand like a vice upon his arm.

"One moment, please." He placed his other hand over the bag and felt the form within. Then fury like an avenging flame burnt in his eyes, while he caught at the wretch's collar and marched him in at the office. There, he made him carefully set the bag down a moment; he did not release his hold of his captive notwithstanding Blim's struggles to free himself. Seeing the day going against them, Boggis caught up the high stool by its legs and swung it round, intending to brain their unwelcome visitor.

Saul caught it magnificently with the hand that was at liberty, and then hurled it straight through the window into the street. He wanted to attract attention. Boggis divined the object and determined to make sure of his own safety; he rushed to the door, but an apparition upset his flight—it was drab, dim Timothy Figg he stumbled against. "You'll break your nob, you will," said the clerk glibly, yet with aggravating coolness. It was not this, however, that caused the estimable Boggis to stagger back. Two policemen had arrived at the door and barred the exit. Among the many unpleasant sights upon this earth, the most unpleasant sight in the opinion of Mr Boggis was one's own doorway blocked by the police. Boggis had never been a lover of the police, and he now looked upon them with very indifferent affection indeed, and much he wondered how Blim felt by this time. He thought it as well to be civil, and said, "What the devil do you want here?" The policeman returned the politeness; at a sign from Figg, he whipped out a pair of handcuffs and made his man fast—for twenty-one years at the least.

Graciously tender was Saul Weir's touch on ascertaining the contents of the bag, and he lifted the emaciated boy with

an exquisite delicacy. The sight of him was so pitiful it moved Saul deeply. The clerk also displayed sympathy with his condition, and shook his head as much as to say he had feared it.

Saul had not noticed Figg at the Herongate, but the latter recognized him, and in a few words told him where he had been seen, adding, further, how all this had been brought about. Timothy explained the miserable state of things in the house, especially above-stairs, and Mr Weir asked him to go out and hire proper bedding at some respectable shop; for it was evident the boy could not be removed.

The police had gone on with their prisoners, and Saul was obliged also to ask Figg to call upon some medical man and beg him to attend immediately. "That will I," said Timothy; "and what is more, I'll look in at home and ask Mrs Figg to step round!" And like a turkey-cock in a fog, the indistinct young man strutted proudly out to execute his threefold errand. Mr Weir looked after him with interest, thought him a curious being, and did not quite know what to make of him, but was glad of his services just at the time.

Left alone with his charge, the beautiful tenderness of Saul Weir's nature manifested itself in every action designed to relieve and soothe. It was long, however, before a more contented expression drove away the troubled look that had so long made the boy's face hopelessly sad. With his head resting on Saul's breast, sunken eyes looking up piteously in that gentle face, his slight form trembling, while convulsive throes ever and anon alarmed the patient Samaritan supporting him, he was thus slowly regaining consciousness when the doctor came. The experienced practitioner at once saw that the treatment would need to be threefold—for injuries, privation, and dread. Saul held him in his arms until arrival of the bedding, when a comfortable couch was prepared. Kind hands were busy for his welfare now, kind faces anxious by his bed. It might all have come too late, he was so dreadfully still, and the face was so white with resignation. "The rope," he moaned—"only wait till I am well." "This is awful," groaned Saul, in indescribable pain. The doctor applied cautious restoratives, and for an hour they

watched beside him with mournful intentness. Then the doctor whispered, "He will not get over it. Do you know the address of any friend or relative who should be here?" "I only know of one," answered Saul, with a tremulous voice—"his schoolmaster." "Communicate with him." Saul did so, despatching a considerably-worded telegraphic message to Dr Virgil.

Saul knew nothing of this boy; he did but see the result of barbarous and malignant oppression, the pleading of the young life extinguished. It distressed him terribly—his feeling heart was torn by the mute suffering, the fear quiveringly betraying so much; and when that fiat went forth from the lips of science, he experienced a great pang. Saul was a genuine-minded man, whose affections were perfect, with emotions undeadened, and a real heart. Realise all that means, and he stands clearly prominent.

Throughout that day the doctor did his best, feeling surprised his patient had survived so long as he had. All the long hours Saul watched, and between the intervals of the doctor's attendance was solicitous and careful with the sufferer. The house was in the hands of the police, pending the trial of Boggis and Blim. They dared not think of removing the boy, or would have felt glad to do so, the noise made by the crowd outside being very harassing. Blinds were drawn, the outward door locked. The crowd heard that a boy had been nearly murdered; and they gathered, with rough expressions of sympathy, which, as the throng increased, grew more violent. The women led opinion: a fierce Amazon, flourishing her brawny fist, spurred on the women: black-and-blue bruises, from which she was herself suffering, incited the Amazon. Two-thirds of those present who had at any time suffered from black-and-blue bruises felt goaded to co-operate in the yelling and screeching. Discord of this kind arouses a sympathy of turbulence; and the people clamoured for the destruction of the house,—ay, not to leave one stone upon another. The door was opened. The police endeavoured to pacify the mob, which refused to be pacified; for next to seeing the criminals, sight of the police always provokes the

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multitude to greater fury, probably ranking one upon a par with the other. It swayed with rage, threatening the building, shaking fists at its dingy windows, and pointing out the broken one as an example of the treatment deserved. Then the people saw a workman. A fine man he looked, even beside the men of the law. He thrust the latter back, and came forward before the passionate concourse, holding up his hand. He would say a word. Yes; they would listen to him, although not to the police. The noise subsided slowly; and when the hush permitted it, he addressed them earnestly: "The boy within is declared to be dying. If we could save his life, it would be impossible with all this confusion. I implore you to disperse quietly and leave the street, thus giving us the opportunity of trying to do our best. No good end can be gained by your staying here now. The prisoners are removed, the house has been well examined; only this poor lad wants our sympathy. Yours can best be shown by leaving us perfectly quiet." Those on the outskirts sensibly withdrew. There was a contact of humanity eddying, its circle spread; and before an hour was over the crowd broke up and went its separate ways. So much for calming influence. Inside all was still very sad; but with quiet out in the street the restlessness disappeared, and Arthur lay peacefully.

In the evening a cab dashed up, stopping some doors off, and waiting, while a gentleman walked hurriedly on to Boggis and Blim's. He looked exceedingly agitated, and scanned the wretched exterior of the house with a look of nervous apprehension. He was admitted by Mr Weir, who begged he would be composed, and told him more than he had thought desirable to describe in the telegram. Dr Virgil was terribly upset, and for some minutes could not go in to his boy. He gave Saul money, and asked him to discharge the cabman—which he did, taking the opportunity of sending by him a hurried note to Daisy, explaining that he was detained, and would possibly not be home all night.

When Dr Virgil entered, and stepped softly to the bed, he knelt, and raised the wasted form he had loved in its beauty. The boy was still in that half-conscious condition. His

watched beside him with mournful intentness. Then the doctor whispered, "He will not get over it. Do you know the address of any friend or relative who should be here?" "I only know of one," answered Saul, with a tremulous voice—"his schoolmaster." "Communicate with him." Saul did so, despatching a considerably-worded telegraphic message to Dr Virgil.

Saul knew nothing of this boy; he did but see the result of barbarous and malignant oppression, the pleading of the young life extinguished. It distressed him terribly—his feeling heart was torn by the mute suffering, the fear quiveringly betraying so much; and when that fiat went forth from the lips of science, he experienced a great pang. Saul was a genuine-minded man, whose affections were perfect, with emotions undeadened, and a real heart. Realise all that means, and he stands clearly prominent.

Throughout that day the doctor did his best, feeling surprised his patient had survived so long as he had. All the long hours Saul watched, and between the intervals of the doctor's attendance was solicitous and careful with the sufferer. The house was in the hands of the police, pending the trial of Boggis and Blim. They dared not think of removing the boy, or would have felt glad to do so, the noise made by the crowd outside being very harassing. Blinds were drawn, the outward door locked. The crowd heard that a boy had been nearly murdered; and they gathered, with rough expressions of sympathy, which, as the throng increased, grew more violent. The women led opinion: a fierce Amazon, flourishing her brawny fist, spurred on the women: black-and-blue bruises, from which she was herself suffering, incited the Amazon. Two-thirds of those present who had at any time suffered from black-and-blue bruises felt goaded to co-operate in the yelling and screeching. Discord of this kind arouses a sympathy of turbulence; and the people clamoured for the destruction of the house,—ay, not to leave one stone upon another. The door was opened. The police endeavoured to pacify the mob, which refused to be pacified; for next to seeing the criminals, sight of the police always provokes the

multitude to greater fury, probably ranking one upon a par with the other. It swayed with rage, threatening the building, shaking fists at its dingy windows, and pointing out the broken one as an example of the treatment deserved. Then the people saw a workman. A fine man he looked, even beside the men of the law. He thrust the latter back, and came forward before the passionate concourse, holding up his hand. He would say a word. Yes; they would listen to him, although not to the police. The noise subsided slowly; and when the hush permitted it, he addressed them earnestly: "The boy within is declared to be dying. If we could save his life, it would be impossible with all this confusion. I implore you to disperse quietly and leave the street, thus giving us the opportunity of trying to do our best. No good end can be gained by your staying here now. The prisoners are removed, the house has been well examined; only this poor lad wants our sympathy. Yours can best be shown by leaving us perfectly quiet." Those on the outskirts sensibly withdrew. There was a contact of humanity eddying, its circle spread; and before an hour was over the crowd broke up and went its separate ways. So much for calming influence. Inside all was still very sad; but with quiet out in the street the restlessness disappeared, and Arthur lay peacefully.

In the evening a cab dashed up, stopping some doors off, and waiting, while a gentleman walked hurriedly on to Boggis and Blim's. He looked exceedingly agitated, and scanned the wretched exterior of the house with a look of nervous apprehension. He was admitted by Mr Weir, who begged he would be composed, and told him more than he had thought desirable to describe in the telegram. Dr Virgil was terribly upset, and for some minutes could not go in to his boy. He gave Saul money, and asked him to discharge the cabman—which he did, taking the opportunity of sending by him a hurried note to Daisy, explaining that he was detained, and would possibly not be home all night.

When Dr Virgil entered, and stepped softly to the bed, he knelt, and raised the wasted form he had loved in its beauty. The boy was still in that half-conscious condition. His

friend leaned over the ashen face, so sweetly submissive, and kissed the cold lips in an agony of sorrow. The stricken woe displayed was so pathetic, Saul kept the room clear of intrusion upon his grief.

"My poor, poor boy!" murmured the Doctor; "and I not to have known of all this! Only get well, Arthur, and we will take such jealous care of you."

He smoothed the cold hands between his own with so light and so warm a touch, it imparted some animation. Then he held the boy's head between his hands, close to his warm face; and anon a little colour tinged the cheeks—a mere evanescent glow, yet more than had been seen all day. A laboured sigh fell from the lips, and he breathed more regularly. For better or worse, there was a change of some sort. Saul stood absorbed in watching. It might be the last phase of all—the final flitting of the hues of earth—or the return of life. He gasped a little, the fingers moved, the eyes opened slowly, he could see with recognition, he smiled upon the kneeling man. That smile! How he would carry its remembrance for ever. It was one of those instant moments, those solemn turning-points, when feelings are overwrought. Yes, he was known; the boy was sensible; love and life had conquered.

Days passed; but with every day there was progress. The happy sense of being kindly tended, the perfect quiet and peace, and frequent nourishment, aided his recovery. At length the attentive practitioner sanctioned removal; and Dr Virgil gratefully accepted Saul's offer to receive the poor boy at his house. Saul had taken a great liking to him; and when he told the carpenter of his long desire to learn some trade, Saul kindly said, "And so you shall. Come and live with me, and see if I can use you better than others have. But you must make haste to get well and strong first." Then Saul and Dr Virgil had a long talk over it. The latter had thought to take him back to Leamington; but he knew the boy's fondness for work, and had learnt sufficient of Mr Weir's kindness of heart to intrust Arthur to his care. He therefore gave his own unqualified consent, and further promised to gain that of Arthur's guardian.

Everything was prepared in the most thoughtful manner at the house of Saul Weir ; and Daisy, who deserved her diploma for skilful nursing, had a fresh charge of a peculiarly pleasing type. With recovery and her delicate ministry, Arthur enjoyed a species of bliss after all he had gone through. His beautiful eyes, filled with touching gratitude, rewarded her for every little service ; and Daisy loved to do her best to awaken that glad contentment. Boy and girl, invalid and nurse, both exquisite ; and the patient working carpenter, making things solid and useful and lasting, busy at the bench, happy and satisfied with life and all about it.



CHAPTER XV.

STAGS' COVERT.

LOUISE, like a spoilt child with its toys, dallied with those poor miserable cousins, until the unfortunate wretches looked, for farmers, quite thin and out of condition. She had too much heart to put an end to their misery, and too little heart to promote their bliss. So between the two, and between the seven, she was downright barbarous, and yet so tender and lovable withal—in short, a pretty little Izaak Walton with those big, nibbling, patient, stupid, dear old cousins.

And nicely they had to suffer for it.

How harmony prevailed amongst them was the greatest riddle. You know, some would have fought each other for the girl until not one of them was left to take her. But there was nothing of that sort going on in this well-regulated farmstead; and if Louise would but make up her mind, the other six would contentedly plod on, grave in buff gaiters, with deeper interest in agriculture, and less in girlhood.

Winter was a trying time, there was so much more leisure with her. Those long evenings when she flitted to and fro, like a lovely rogue the firelight made rosy as red orchards, up to every possible and impossible mischief,—none of it unkind; down upon all-fours after her kittens on the rug; clambering up the furniture to twine sprigs of holly in the picture-cords upon the walls; stealing out upon the garden pathway, where broad bands of light from the windows fall across the snow, keeping in the shady part while she made a charge of miniature snowballs; taking out hot elder-wine to the nipped-up school-children singing the carols; spending as much time in

the kitchen as in the parlour, up-stairs and down, the life and soul of the place,—it all teased them, it was so captivating with tricky mirth and buoyancy, while so enchanting with dainty coquetry—the coquetry of childhood mind, not age—there is a wide difference.

John Clark watched his niece with as much delight as any of them. Her antics were seldom too extravagant to afford him pleasure and amusement. Sitting close by the fireplace in the old seat of years, smoking pipe after pipe with meditative enjoyment, he would recall a time when only the big boys trooped in and out the room, and wonder how he endured the place without some such bright spirit as this sportive fairy. He was very fond of her, and she was very fond of him. Never did a couple get along together so well as these two. True, he had to pay toll for it, returning kisses from her cherry lips; giving free use of his knee when she chose to sit thereon; surrendering his purse for picking and stealing when she levied black-mail; promising lambs when she pleaded for their lives; employing labourers from among the cottagers she took under her protection; letting her keep the key of the apple-store, with the result of finding all gone except the bad ones; allowing her to stay away from church at will—which was nearly always; and in all other ways spoiling her so far as he could: but it was the toll paid by his love—and, unlike his principles regarding tolls generally, he begrudged none of it.

Of course this young lady was better behaved with the young men, and playfulness notwithstanding, conducted herself as she should do: but when they saw the cherries piled up for their father, their mouths naturally watered for a share; and when the pouting lips parted for the prettiest of speeches for him, they were forced to feel content with what they could get.

The best of it was, each of these good yeomen felt a certain measure of compassion for his six brothers; each seemed so much in favour; the kinder tone, the sweeter voice, the arch smile, directed pointedly, as it appeared; and each being of the warm-hearted nature he was, that pity for the others rose

uppermost. This went round in turn. The emotion of a day. To be shivered and shattered on the next, when one of the others obtained the tone, and voice, and smile, and the pity and compassion were reserved for the rest.

Yet so perfect was her control over them, that had she wished to warm her toes by playing at horses on their hard frosty roads, she might have driven a team of six, with one over to put the harness on. Things almost as outrageous were in daily operation to please her—it is questionable what they would have stopped at, indeed, in the matter of trying to win the sweet reward of her merry thanks. Merry! Ay, that was it. Her laughter broke the silence in every room in the house till it rippled with silvery glee. The joyous rattle of her glad delight with winter-time, outvied the cheerful crackle of the fire, and the room was as full of laughter as is a playhouse genial with comedy. The robins hopped to the crumbs she scattered, until she could no longer restrain her merriment when they flew off to the garden palings. The sedate old cows in the yard lifted their eyes as she skipped near, with the strange, pensive stolidness they sometimes assume. Past the roadside pond, where the boys sliding looked after that fairy figure, chasing her dog scampering before her, both revelling in the liberty; and who can fancy this fawn of the wooded glades taught quietness and wifely decorum? But who is that crossing the field with such long strides to reach her? A splendid fellow any way, in velveteen shooting-coat, gun over shoulder, hound at heel, hare in hand, glad eagerness animating his comely, honest face. It is Cousin Thomas, feeling the least bit ashamed to steal a march on his brothers, but for the life of him unable to resist it. She sees him coming and hides in the ditch, pretending to be looking for primroses, holding her struggling dog with difficulty, that it shall not betray her. Thomas reaches the gate and leans on it, warm and out of breath, looking up the road and down the road, annoyed; then he hears the dog bark close by (Louise gives it a box on the ear for its pains), and a happy light makes his face brighter than January sunshine has power to do. He whistles, to his hound, but Louise thinks it is because they have run

herself to earth ; and she climbs out in a fine pet, and won't look his way at all, but walks on slowly, fumbling at some old root pulled up for an excuse. He is over the gate in a trice, and by her side, "Shall I carry that for you, Cousin?" he asks in a low, soft voice. "No, Cousin;" she answers in a high, hard tone; and her lovely head tosses discontentedly. "Are you angry, Louise?" murmurs the young man in ardent sorrow. "Of course I am, when you ought to be over at the wood. You know my fondness for jugged hare and red-currant jelly, and you call that poor leveret (which you should not have shot) a morning's sport. Cousin, I'm not often disgusted with any one, but upon my word, I am with you!" This discomfiting speech routed all the sportsman's gladness. "Bless my heart," he cries in a worry, "I'll go and shoot all the hares in the wood, and then go on to Ipswich and buy up all the jelly!"

And he leaves her with the pretence to do so.

When he gets back, Miss Contrariness meets him, draws him into a little side-room, the door of which she locks, and begins to correct him in this style. "Now you did that out of temper, you know. Do you think I'd marry anybody who went rushing off in that manner directly I said I liked anything?" This sharp reprimand made him feel uncomfortable, and he began to stammer that it was out of love, not temper. "A farmer who would shoot a hare before it's a year old, would do anything, and certainly cannot know what love is! Like a bad boy in a corner, you shall say you're sorry before I let you out, or forgive you." And he looked most woeful, desponding, sorry, and he said so,—when she forgave him, and awarded him for submission a kiss on his rough red cheek. And then the great big fellow (he could have knocked down an ox with his doubled fist) knew what the tears are that start unbidden after sorrow and reconciliation. And she *was* kind to Thomas all that evening. The others could not quite make it out, and felt fidgety. Joseph in particular. He had been nursing some quiet little hopes all to himself. Louise had met him down by the stable, taken him round in the stackyard, and made him stand back against

the shed they nailed up the moles on, while she snowballed him until she was tired. And he enjoyed it very much, or pretended to. Certainly the vigorous exercise lent a surpassing glow to her cheeks and dazzling sparkle to her eyes, which nobody saw but himself. He felt quite distressed there was only himself there to see it, she looked so beautiful, and he felt satisfied it meant special favour; no girl would coax a cousin into a stackyard and pelt him if she didn't like him. He felt quite sorry for those other poor fellows indoors, for he loved his brothers, although he loved his cousin more. He tried to catch her eye afterwards, on the strength of an understanding, but she didn't see it. Joseph was full of sound sense, and determined to know one way or the other, so next market-day he bought an expensive telescope. He had often heard her say she would like to look at the stars through one. He could coax too, and would try the lawn. It answered beautifully: she was delighted: wanted to take it to pieces to see what it was made of, and was in an agony of disappointment because it would not magnify objects and specimens. Altogether it was like looking from the wrong end, and the admirable Joseph did not like it. He wheedled her to the lawn, though, and they studied astronomy, until he staggered under her multitude of questions; for he knew rather less of the heavenly bodies than of those which sustain the bodies of earth, and he told some awful stories, as witness this: "What's that one, Joe? do tell me, please," pointing right in the face of an orb sparkling magnificently. "I believe that's the star of love, Cousin!" "Is it?" she said, sharply; "perhaps you'll call it something else!" "A fixed star, then, if I may." "No, you mayn't." And she swept the firmament with her erratic vision until the planets danced in each other's way irregularly. Joseph thought his love looked dim as the misty nebulae ahead; he sighed, the grim night seemed darkly symbolical of his future; his voice trembled with emotion, yet was tenderness itself. "Dear little Cousin," said he, softly, "dare I hope ever, ever to win your love in return for mine?" Hanging feverishly upon her answer: half earnestly, half mockingly uttered,

"Darling big Cousin, I have loved you always, always will!" And the admirable Joseph knew not whether to collapse or to hope: he blew his nose. This personal accomplishment varies very much with individuals: Mr Joseph's performance was prodigious. "Oh, I do hate you when you make that horrid noise. I won't stop out here any longer."

And she did not.

Went straight in, in a pet. And keen was the commiseration of the other six for Joseph, while their own prospects rose surprisingly. "Whoever he is," said Joseph to himself, putting away his apparatus in the dark, "he'll lead a precious unhappy time of it if he isn't allowed to blow his own nose; out of doors even!" And the stalwart one felt hurt. He wore a troubled look on entering, and prospects rose higher still; Mr Richard's particularly. Mr Richard had made a grand move; it almost took his breath away to think of it. He had bought a Dresden trinket-tray, at a long figure—for it was elegant, and Richard had excellent taste; and he placed it on her dressing-table, with "*From Richard*" reposing at the bottom, all in the midst of lover's knots and rosebuds. Two sprightly cupids formed a rest for a small glass in a frame of flowers with the tray at foot. Altogether it was very creditable to the young man's choice, and if Louise did not appreciate the gift she ought to. Louise was exceedingly pleased with it, burnt a light all night in its honour, placed it on the little table by the bed, and was engaged till past one looking at herself, thinking of ermine-bordered heroes, and herself one day a duchess, with a large pier-glass of that description to perform her toilet evolutions before. In the morning Richard got his breakfast over early, before she came down—he did not want to be thanked before the others—and went away down Croft's Lane to where the men were carting manure. Not for long was he left alone; she came dashing after him, trundling a monster hoop off a brewing-vat, and she caught him round the waist with it, and with the giant in tow, drew him off out of hearing of the men. "I've come to thank you, dear," she said, wonderfully serious, and without a doubt sincere; "you have been my favourite cousin, and I like you better

than ever now!" giving him her little white hand, ungloved, red at the joints with the cold, and brandishing her hoop-stick. "And when will it be something more than 'like,' sweet cousin?" asked he, tremulously. "Now there's a Shakespearean twang to that 'sweet cousin,' I can't abide; anybody would suppose we were strolling players out for a holiday; I know what you mean, 'trying Louise,' and why don't you say so?" "Because I am in love, dear girl, and to me you are all perfection!" "Well, I hope you'll keep in love ever so long, for I'm sure you'll see different afterwards. One of my teachers at school said I was a horrid little plague. She didn't get any good by it, for I paid her out; but it was true all the same, and I do fear I'm not altered. Now, Cousin" (very solemnly), "I'm going to amend, join a nunnery, if they'll have me, and be wonderfully good!" "Saints forbid!" cried the lover with haste, in horror; but then the idea of his lively cousin so placed presenting itself more ludicrously than alarmingly, the handsome young fellow laughed aloud; whereat Louise rebuked him thus, and it was no laughing matter, rest assured: "You are making fun of my religious designs, and it's very wicked and unkind of you; it doesn't follow because I don't like the humdrum services and clergymen at Ipswich that I shouldn't make a devout recluse, and as good a sister as I have a bad cousin. I don't like you a bit, I don't; and I won't stay in the Lane any longer."

And she did not.

She whipped her wooden pony hard with displeasure. These amiable gentlemen were always putting a foot in it. When five (one was in the barn) saw her come trundling back, they could tell something was amiss—they could always tell, so quick were the loving glances—and sympathetic was the interest on behalf of poor Dick at the carting. There was a movement astir as to which should speak to her; she quieted that by driving indifferently past and across the yard to the barn, and every man thus quaintly piqued thought particularly of Philip, who was in the granary. "I was just thinking of you, Cousin!" said Philip, as she bounded over the woodwork and stood by him. "I hope to goodness not,"

impatiently scattering the straw about with her feet; "why not of the grain?" Philip, who was noted for shrewdness, meant going on a different tack to that adopted by his brothers, and replied: "There's a young white owl yonder, up on the ledge under the thatch, and I'll climb up and get it for you;" pointing over to where a lot of old timber was piled for firewood. Louise commenced by going at a rate that was not exactly, yet not far off from being, head-over-heels, in the direction of the wood ascent. Clambering the rough timbers was as unequal work as racing over the straw, and might have taxed the ingenuity of an acrobat; but the young tom-boy was agile, lithe, supple, sure-footed and sure-handed, and climbed the dusty wood with the lightness of a squirrel. Awful was the destruction of the cobwebs, and the huge barnspiders glared upon her, while the mice ran along the ledges in a panic; so fair a foe had never flown so high before: all the upper portion seemed let in flats to the rats and mice, and the entire colony turned out in dismay or to do battle. Clinging to the planks, and leaning upon slanting beams, she edged her way along, mounting to the white attraction of owl's roost, and securing it. Well, then, she could not get down with one hand, and was too proud to call Cousin Philip, although he could have placed a plank across the timber and rescued her. She was determined not to let go the owlet, and was at a loss how to manage; but she began to come down, and found it less agreeable than rising in the world. It vexed her, it was so difficult, and she pouted prettily all to herself with the mortification. Suddenly she cried out, "Philip, Philip, I am falling!" He was across in three strides, and up like a madman before she had recovered the vibration of her cry, finding her trembling beautifully, and pitifully at his mercy. He caught her gallantly, supporting her over his shoulder, and descending with exquisite care lest his beloved burden was hurt. When upon the straw at the foot, she stood pale and grateful, and to the young man's amazement took the bird from her pocket. She kissed it; then, seeing him look greedily at that caress, she kissed him too, and thought he deserved it if ever anybody did. "You have been really very good, my Philip!"

My Philip! How his heart leaped! there was almost as much commotion as when she was in danger. He drew his breath quickly; palms of his hands felt hot, but whether with emotion or climbing he could not quite tell in that instant deliciousness of being announced as *her* Philip. "And what reward will you give me, Louise?" he implored, with a quivering lip. "A feather from the tail of my bird, my dear!" Light as the answer she plucked it him, then like page and falcon gave it liberty from her cruel, kind hand. The owlet flew upward, and would have a fine tale to tell its mamma at midnight. Crest-fallen Philip Clark, with a little moan of long-protracted disappointment at its crisis, walked slowly back to the granary door. Louise stood midway of the thrashing-floor, repentant. She meekly entreated his pardon. He returned to her side buoyed with hope once more. "You do grieve me sometimes, Cousin!" he said, simply. And the girl, in one of her sorrowful moods and with averted face, answered sadly, "I fear some day I shall grieve you more, Philip!" and he thought she alluded to her marriage-day and could not reply. "When I go on the stage," she continued, "and look lovely in plumes, like my pictures of Madame Vestris, or Miss Julia St George!" And the faithful Philip did certainly look unhappily incredulous. "You would scarcely be so happy then, Louise (humouring her fancy), as if a homely farmer's wife." "Well, that platitude might have been taken out of some mouldy old play, and I don't like it at all; give *me* new remarks. Now, if you had said I should be in enchantment as a dramatic aspirant developed into a duchess, it would have been a good deal nearer what I think about it." "Then in that case," answered the young man with dignity, "I won't waste time discussing it." And he returned to his sieve, dividing the chaff from the wheat, working with manly air and upright: she should not see how he was wounded. "Well, if ever I had a nasty, disagreeable, cross-grained cousin, you're one!" she called to him, and he thrilled with pain, biting his lip to keep back the impulse to answer her. And she whisked out, highly incensed.

Philip rested a hand thoughtfully upon the winnowing-

machine while he looked wistfully after her, his great heart loved her so very dearly there was room for no other feeling.

At ten o'clock she started for her walk with Floss, who was not good company, since in lieu of walking by her side, he went a quarter of a mile ahead. The day was a superb one for exercise, and Louise went further than usual, even to the hill where the Herongate estate commenced. Her curiosity was aroused by seeing Floss, far ahead as usual, stand in the middle of the road and bark with fear or irritation, and she guessed it was at something in the cave there situate. "Gipsies, I'll be bound," she said to herself. "I'll go and have a look at them, perhaps have my fortune told;" and she hurried on, excitably eager to find out the truth. She discovered that scientific gipsy, Mr Redland, whom she recognised from having seen him once before when at her uncle's. Louise never stood upon ceremony, and she walked in at the cave without asking permission; but she drew herself up in astonishment—the *material* transformed it into a wonder-place. It was rather in her way. She was interested, and examined the alchemist's paraphernalia; he contemplating her without annoyance. "I would have come to see you before, had I known of this. What are you making? do tell me," with her most pleading insistence. "Nothing, young lady; I am unmaking." "Unmaking! How funny you are! Well, what have you cooking?" She pointed to a copper pan over a slow fire. "What you call sand, what I call alluvial silicious stone," and his thin, pinched face, relaxed to a kind smile. "Yes," she said; "I like my name best. You are none the better for using those hard words, are you?" Confronting that attenuated figure with all the erect honesty of impetuous youth. Not affording time, she flew at the possible answer with another, and to her important, question, "Are you a magician, sorcerer, or necromancer? You needn't mind telling me; I shall like you all the better if you are, and I'll come every day and help if you will let me." A look of intense sadness overspread his worn face; the innocence and beauty of this bright spirit moved him to softened feeling, and that childish question touched a painful chord. "No, my child,"

he said, with a slow, absent gravity, "I am only a chemist." "Oh, I hoped you were seeking for gold, as they used to do!" How her remark pierced! "I *should* like it so, especially if you gave me some, for I wish to be rich and a lady,—a great lady." He laid a hand fiercely on her wrist, "Never mention gold. Flee its accursed shadow. Do not let your pure soul be tarnished by it. Avoid thinking of it, and when you see it, spurn it." "That, I'm sure, I shan't! And you *do* hurt; just look at my wrist,—any one would think I'd been wearing a bracelet several sizes too small." He had fallen back and was moodily sitting on his stool, elbow on knee, his pallid and lined old face resting upon his hand. Her prattle had stirred him as he was seldom stirred. She playfully handled his instruments and tools, looked into a deep hollowing out of the sand, curled up her pert little nose at the noxious fumes, turned over his provision-basket, and noticed his stock of eatables was getting low. "I'll bring you a hamper of goodies," she said, "things you will relish—some of them of my making!" He thanked her cordially. It relieved him of a troubling perplexity. He could not quit the cave to obtain more.

Next day she did as she promised, and found him apparently lighter-hearted; he was quite full of cheerful questioning, and seemed prepared to listen to her chatter as long as she liked. "And what pleasant evenings you must have, my dear, while your uncle tells you stories and traditions of the past,—very pleasant! I shouldn't mind being there to hear them, but *I* have something else to do. The old chronicles are *very* interesting—mystic spells, valiant Bayards, haunted mansions, hidden treasure,—oh, very interesting!" "Yes," said the girl with dreamy thoughtfulness, for he had touched the romance-loving side of her nature; "I love them." "You have no startling legend connected with your county, have you?" "I don't think so; only" (correcting herself) "about a fabulous treasure, as you say, which I can just remember my poor darling mother used to tell me when I was a very little thing, with other marvellous stories." He was absorbingly interested, for such a nursery history, and he pleasantly asked

if her mother belonged to Suffolk, and finding it so he more pleasantly still tried to woo her memory of the old stories heard in youth. "I seem to have an impression my mother really believed in this, that is the strangest part of it; and I can't disentangle truth from tradition." "And did your mother say where this wonderful treasure was laid?" with smothered eagerness. "Oh yes; she used laughingly to say it should all be mine, and my brow should wear a coronet; and I *was* good, expecting I should get it!" And the girl laughed at her infantile simplicity, without thinking that it might have materially biassed her disposition. He repeated his question with painful intentness, occupying himself to hide it. Before she could reply a gig drew up in front of the cave, the occupant having with immeasurable astonishment caught sight of her and the surroundings. "Louise!" exclaimed he. "Rosine!" exclaimed she; and darted out to pat the mare joyfully, with a shy, glad glance at Rosine's master.

"You are the strangest girl I ever encountered; where will you turn up next? The last time I ran upon you it was fostering strollers, and now you seem to have taken the caves of the earth in your circuit. Come, you're a startling climber; jump up beside me, and I'll carry you home in triumph!" So saying he turned the head of his horse, for he had been on his way to the Squire's.

"That I will, and thank you," cried the girl gleefully, springing up by gentle aid of gentle hand; and enthroned in the vacant seat she waved *her* hand to the forlorn-looking recluse, touched in spite of her sportive delight by his sad, bent figure, and that awful look of wistful, weird unrest.

"Well, and how are you?" inquired Lord Gascoyne, with emotional tenderness.

"Lovely! How are you?"

"Enjoying this drive just at present. I was coming over to see you later in the day."

"Well, set me down a little way off, and come just the same. I don't mind how many times a-day I see you when you are good."

His eyebrows arched in a displeased and surprised man-

ner,—by his ethics, fastidious ones, it was not the correct mode of talk for that beauteous being.

"By being good, I mean bringing Rosine with you." The eyebrows came down. "I do love this horse. I'd marry anybody for a horse like this!" clapping her hands with delight.

"If you don't sit still, she will run away with you."

"Oh, splendid! And I wonder where we should stop?"

"At the church-door, of course!"

"If you talk like that I'll get down," turning her head sharply, with playful anger.

"Why, you just now said you would marry anybody for a horse like this!"

"Yes; but you don't know that anybody would be at the church-door."

"And am I not anybody, then?" with a sly and gentle earnestness.

"Well—yes—you are, somebody very great and good; too great to stand by a church-door and say to a poor little mortal like me, 'Will you marry me?'"

"Indeed, you make a mistake. I come from Beechester to say those self-same words, and to take you back with me if you will go."

"I couldn't go without my cousins."

"My conscience! but I hope you will!"

"You have no conscience to ask me to leave them. They've all asked me to marry them, and I must do so."

"You've your work cut out, then. I wonder if I shall ever find you in a serious mood?"

"If ever I was in one, it was when you came bothering up this morning. You always seem to interrupt me when I'm most expressly engaged."

"And if you're most expressly engaged to your seven cousins, I've done so again."

"What a disagreeable thing you are! Do you know, you're ever so much more disagreeable than any of them! I don't exactly hate you, but you are a tease."

"I hope not."

"But you are. You provoke one awfully. As to marrying such a tiresome, tyrannical torment, that I wouldn't!"

"And this is your answer?" with unwonted gravity.

"That is my answer," firmly, even, as he thought, unkindly.

"Then, in that case, permit me to put you down as you proposed, and I will return to pay my respects to Mr Masheter, and then go back to Beechester; the sooner the better. I wanted this matter settled, one way or the other, and if I am the provoking person you describe, it is certain I should not make your life a happy one; and as that would be my endeavour, it is much better that our union never came to pass."

"I've been saying so for this last eight months—and I shall be glad to get down. I don't like you nor your horse, nor anything: and there's only uncle in all the world to live for." While this was breaking petulantly from her quivering lips, she caught at the reins, slipped down, and went on her way, passionate tears streaming down her cheeks. No word for her dog, no thought for anything, for anybody, only her naughty wilfulness tugging at her heart-strings painfully.

And he drove on, a great sadness in his eyes robbed of their disdain, as his life seemed robbed of its lofty hope; great distrust and disgust, with a confirmed taint, that of a suspicion of all humanity. He felt horribly dispirited and low. She had changed from being perversely coy to peevishly cruel. He felt mistaken in her nature; that pretty waywardness was after all but petty wilfulness; and he experienced the deepest sorrow. And when they came to Stags' Covert, the prettiest glade in the county, he allowed his mare to walk awhile. Many a group of hunters, himself among the number, had made the wayside nook picturesque, while their horses browsed, and themselves refreshed from the richly-chased horns. He looked back on that time regretfully. There was no distracting disappointment then, and the red rose was not brighter than cheek and coat. The covert had been associated with so many pleasant memories he felt sorry to have this cloud cast on its associations. The gnarled trees and bosky thickets, the green yews rising from grassy uplands, the bowery lane

verdant with moss, the ash-woods stretching dim and splendid, musical with the songs of thrush and wren; glimpses of fresh cattle-pastures, sheep-bells heard in the distance from the Herongate flocks; ivy with its fibred roots fastened on the coiling trunks of outspread trees; slanting branches forming in the summer a foliated lattice that descended to the straggling brambles; through it, a clear crisp bit of mellow sky; under it, mossy mounds, broad burdock-leaves, lichens, dry fern, the red dead-nettle, and a pavement of acorns; shining walls of holly, a glowing vista of furze and tapering columns of fir, lent their aid in furnishing the sequestered glade, beautiful from January to December. And not far off was the old Watergate, haunt of the herons, from which the estate was named, lying right away, out of sight, almost out of knowledge.

His lordship was carefully driving through the covert, wishing himself a bird or something else, and feeling as depressed as a lord in his senses, not a poet, can feel, when lo! bursting through the brambles came an animal, a small white animal, that animal a dog. He did not like small dogs, and looked at it through his glass with anything but an amiable expression. Dog barked; man asked, "What the devil do you want?" Dog barked again; man laid out with whip; dog receded, wagged its head knowingly, turned tail, and ran away. Then he remembered it was *her* dog. Yes, he had seen it with her; heard the girl call it, and he called too; he whistled; he conjured that dog to honour him with another salute. It came back, this time in the arms of its mistress, who looked tearfully penitent, the very ideal of lovely contrition. She walked up to him bravely, her cheeks suffused with blushes, and held her hand out frankly. "Will you forgive me?" with an air of pretty entreaty. In answer he jumped down and took her to his heart with a hug of overjoyed forgiveness; and she did not seek to escape, indeed he might have hugged all the life out of her, she had nestled so still. This was a fine ending to her contrariness and irresolution, this crushing of a fragile wood-nymph. It was well no sorry fate led the satyrs thither; but it must be known sooner

or later. "You will go back with me?" he pleaded endearingly. She simply nodded her head. "And what will your uncle say?" "I don't know," she murmured, as though rather dreading that part of it. "And those cousins—whom you cannot take with you, remember." Apparently she was resigned even to leaving those cousins behind her. She smiled, confidently satisfied, but heaved one sigh that was full of pity for them all. And he admired that side gleam of compassion; he had never believed her hard-hearted and void of feeling, and the more he learned of her character the more disposed was he to credit her with very opposite qualities.

"Now, my darling, as we are so close to the Herongate, I should like to introduce my bride to my relations. There is no need to introduce yourself, since you are so well known."

"I shall like to go."

"Yes? Thank you, very much. And after luncheon I will drive you home, when I trust to gain Mr Clark's assent to our marriage."

Why, she was now as nicely demure as some charming young Puritan of old. Good? Ay, a very model of goodness; willing, engagingly amiable, gentle, meek; he could scarcely think it the same being, felt nervously apprehensive of finding himself disenchanted by some sudden outburst resembling those which had caused him so much sorrow, and leaned with extravagant anxiety upon her every word and action to see if this change was a significant reality.

They drove slowly along until they reached the Herongate.

"Whom have we here?" cried the Squire, cheerily, coming out to meet them, his kind eyes glistening with pleasure at the sight of Louise.

"Shall I tell him?" asked his lordship, with a sly look.

"If you like," she answered, softly, smiling very happily, and looking altogether, thought the Squire, prettier than he had ever seen her. Nevertheless he loved the piquant charm which rendered Louise distinct from others, and which essentially belonged to "the pride of all the Herongate estate," as the Squire in affable compliment styled her.

Having permission, Lord Gascoyne did so,—“My bride-elect, dear Cousin.”

“Oh, indeed? Then I must heartily congratulate you both. But come in, the sight of your happy faces will cheer my daughter.”

As they entered, strains of exquisite music, and voices blended in song, caused them to stand still a moment.

“Cousin Etta and Theodore, I do verily believe?” said Lord Gascoyne, in a low voice. The Squire nodded.

Louise thought afterwards that charming melody had been the most fitting overture to meeting two of the fairest beings she had ever encountered.

The Squire softly opened the door, and a scene of luxurious comfort was disclosed. Much deep colour from massy hangings; a velvet wall-paper flooded with crimson, warm as the glow upon the Bourbon *Chénédolé* roses; a carpet of gorgeous gloom, with furniture to correspond. Two large fireplaces, with cheerful fires; near one, the invalid reclining upon a couch: she was dressed in black silk, and it lent extra pallor to her delicate face. The hair neatly braided above the clear brow, the small sensitive features, the veil of resigned sweetness which continuous pain sometimes draws over the countenance; the tender hand with its involuntary movement, always an index of suffering; the slender symmetrical form, wasted to ethereal proportions. These outward signs presented Mary Masheter as she has always been present to us, enduring, patient, and beautiful by inner rather than by any visible attractions. She was seldom low-spirited; possibly because hope of recovery had never really abandoned her. Hope is not sand, to be broken by tides of depression, but a bar of iron, whereto we cling confidingly so long as there is life.

A different picture posed by the other fire; so rare a sight and so dainty a one, it should be fancied upon ivory rather than in relief from the dense colour of that background. Etta playing upon the harp; the lace of her short open sleeves thrown back to give greater freedom; her graceful movement in rhythm with the music; folds of straw-hued muslin seeming to envelop her like a cloud. But it was not this so much as

the surprising and exquisite bloom of health which attracted. No child could have carried a more dazzling tint upon the cheeks, or a more petal-like pink and white delicacy from the long golden tresses to the dimpled chin. That hair was an unbound, untidy, painter's ideal, all astray in splendid dalliance with the shoulders; tossed idly from the brow, and falling back as hair was meant to fall,—one or two wanton tresses curled upon the harp, one stealing down to nestle on her bosom.

The bride-elect looked at this fairy creature with much the same sort of pleasure as the German peasant-maids may have experienced who watched Lurline.

But eyes could not dwell too long on Etta while her brother stood by. There was something so knightly gentle in his manner, so marked by ultra-refinement, this would have won attention without the graces of person. He was tall and slenderly formed, a model of symmetry and grace. And here again the matchless health with which this family was endowed shone brilliantly, the chief witchery amidst many handsome features. Genius was read upon the brow, the whole contour of his head bespoke intellect and goodness; it imparted a distinguished air, which his presence generally confirmed.

The musician and her accompanist paused upon noticing the intruders, and they greeted Cousin Gascoyne with evident pleasure. His lordship was very popular with all his relations and friends.

Mr Masheter introduced Louise. That vivacious one was upon her best behaviour. She left them, however, without ceremony to walk across the room to Miss Masheter, who greeted her affectionately. It had always been a tender characteristic of this many-mooded girl to show unrestrained sympathy with invalids, and such as were unable to enjoy the rude, boisterous health she herself revelled in. The frank, feeling action, and her soft tremulous voice while speaking, were so gratefully welcome to the sensitive invalid her eyes filled with tears, and her lips quivered: only Louise saw, and she felt to love her for it.

Good people of old had been wont to say the Gascoynes

and Masheters would one day become united ; but there was no change in Mary's countenance while her father alluded to the approaching relationship between his lordship and Louise. It was Theodore's words and Theodore's looks won regard from her ; and they loved each other with a sort of Platonic tenderness, a blending of feeling, sensibility, and poetry. This attachment—compound of love, friendship, and sympathy—was far too precious to be stripped of its idealism by any thought of an alliance. They would have loved for ever and a day, but not to end its mystic charm by the rites and ceremonies of an earthly church and union so often but a partnership of the senses. Cousins ever, cousins always : and such exquisite friends as it seldom falls to one to see. It was in the nature of each to love long—apart, to feel knit—away, to be one in all finer thought divided. And thus to let the hours flit on, and dreamy days glide by, without desiring the consummation so many lose their reason for and writers use their pens to uphold as the one grand reward of life.

Lord Gascoyne saw the considerate thoughtfulness with which Louise hastened to Miss Masheter, and it strengthened his opinion of that underlying vein of compassion he had before so pleasurably detected.

He had now the opportunity to observe also another resplendent trait—she seldom lifted her eyes to that fascinating fellow, Theodore ; and considering how she was inured to masculine glances, it seemed to him very excellent behaviour, particularly excellent, and he hoped it would always continue.

Etta Lute was one of the most amiable and tender-hearted of girls, and she gave Louise every inducement to form a pleasant acquaintance. That soft, shrinking delicacy, which formed the retiring charm about Etta's disposition, was a counter-attraction to the strong nature of Louise, without which contrast there can scarcely be permanent regard.

"How clever you are!" said Louise, warmly. "I always loved the harp. When I was at school in Kensington, a man and woman used occasionally to play on a harp and violin in the street, and you would never believe how I used to watch for their coming. The man played the harp, and I often

thought I would like to go and take the fiddle while the woman went round for the money."

Miss Lute listened to the *naïve* confession with a deepening glow upon her cheeks, and glanced embarrassed in the direction of Cousin Gascoyne; he saw it, and said to himself, twittering, "Louise is 'outraging the probabilities' again, I know."

"You would scarcely have done that," said Miss Lute, softly.

"Wouldn't I?" Louise tossed her head. "I believe at that day I'd have blacked my face and played upon the banjo!" She curled her lip angrily at the recollection of the fettered wildness of those days.

Theodore came to them. "What is the topic?" he asked.

"Classical music," answered Louise, with a pretty side-look at Etta—adding ingenuously, "I was recalling my earlier prepossession for the banjo."

Theodore looked surprised and disconcerted, and cast a side-glance at Lord Gascoyne, who remarked his heightened colour, and felt decidedly uncomfortable. He crossed over to them, asking carelessly, "What is amusing you so?"

"A band contest," said Louise, laughing. "I have been expressing my admiration for the harp, but also saying I am not averse to the banjo."

His lordship, in a slightly aggrieved manner, remarked, "Louise indulges in these extravagant sayings to be different to other people. Now confess, dear culprit, you do not mean it."

"Well, I only know that I used to perform magnificently both upon a jew's-harp and a comb."

"I can't do anything with her," said Lord Gascoyne to the Squire, "she's as bad as ever;" and he laughingly made way for that gentleman.

Mr Masheter, with an air of pretended reproof, said, "You will reform very much when you get to Beechester. won't you, my dear? It is a place of great propriety."

"Then I'm sure I shan't like it! So we may prepare for war at the outset."

Theodore joined the invalid.

"What does my dear Mary think of our cousin's choice?"

"Very highly. I like her behaviour better than an artificial one. She has much undeveloped tenderness, and no end of good sense."

"You always see deeper than I do, with that softness of judgment we call perception."

"It is the privilege granted to invalids; sometimes a painful one."

"I thought her hard, cruel, vain, conscious only of her own attractions. But that is the cardinal failing of nature, and we do not blame the lustrous kingfisher for glancing at his own bright image in the mere, or the splendid flower that bends to herself coquettishly on the clustered banks of African pools."

"You admire her?" asked Miss Masheter quickly, her long lashes veiling her eyes.

"Yes, because she is pretty; it is my nature to do so: but I could never like her. And now, have you tried my new ballad? Does it answer to all I claim for it?"

"Scarcely. And we must not be too exacting with such interpretation."

"I don't know. Look at the Bugle song with its marvellous word-mockery of the flying echoes, and the Brook in which we hear the very ripple and splash, and swift, soft flow of the water. Their author has given us work reaching that high point in excellence too commonly regarded as the ideal, but which often is but the beautiful and innocent simplicity of true poetry, or more aptly, of truth in poetry."

"Your Ballad of Arcady is your loftiest flight; but even that lacks heart and feeling."

"Arcadia is where the vulgar cannot tread; hallowed by the subtle influence of a Higher presence."

"Your ballad seems generally approved. It is no mean triumph to satisfy the exactions of the scholarly critics whose pleasure and whose business it is to detect false notes."

Theodore bowed with a pleased expression. Mary's remarks were welcome, whether in censure or praise.

After luncheon Lord Gascoyne drove over to the farm with his mischievous *fiancée*.

As they pulled up, Robert Clark came from the stables to attend to the horse. Soresly did the good fellow suffer. But as in Suffolk private pique is not usually allowed to stand before the first duty of hospitality, he quieted his chagrin, and took the horse with cool courtesy, endeavouring meanwhile not to catch his sweetheart's eyes.

The struggle made by these young farmers was an earnest one, although their peace of mind was disturbed and their hearts aching.

Louise forbore to banter, and was kinder than of yore. "I am going with Rosine to the stables," she said to his lordship. "I think you will find my uncle indoors."

Thus dismissed, and with no particular desire to go to the stables himself, Lord Gascoyne walked towards the house. Robert plodded on, leading the horse; he walked with a benumbed air, while Louise trudged in the rear, feeling and looking horribly guilty.

When the shelter of the stables was reached, the girl could neither restrain her feeling for him, nor preserve calmness for herself. She stood before him a suppliant; her very demeanour, so altered and strangely tender, wounding him to the soul.

"Robert," she said, tremulously, "when we were both children we played at sweethearts, and loved each other dearly; and later, when I should have known better, still carried on our play. Now I have come to end it here to-day, base as you will think me."

He was holding the shafts while the horse withdrew therefrom, and he turned suddenly towards Louise, his face flinching with pain, his fine form drawn with the effort to repress it.

"Ay, Louise," said he, calmly, "while the play lasted it was sweet, and this end to it is surprisingly bitter."

He turned aside impatiently, and followed Rosine into the stable.

"Poor, dear Robert," she said, beginning to cry. "I kne how you would suffer."

"Don't 'poor dear Robert' me," he said, passionately; "save that for Lord Stocat, who lives by plunder of farm-nests."

At which she cried the more, and pouted. She would pacify him, but not consent to hear her beau slandered.

"You've misled us," he said, feeling grievously for his brothers, "and, like most girls, done a heartless deed."

"That's a story," she said, hotly, dashing her tears aside. "It isn't because I've behaved so, that you're to put it on to other girls with less cousins and more propriety."

"Well, it's not for me to say you're all alike, for, thank goodness, I never had to do with another; but I put before you all some sturdy honest fellow like one of my brothers."

"Yes; but suppose I'd given my hand to one of them, as I've many a time been asked to do?"

"I should have gloried in his happiness as though it were my own, but I cannot in a poacher's who sets a jewelled snare."

"Now, that *is* a story!" she cried, thoroughly aroused. "He never gave me a present in his life, nor promised me one."

"But you won't deny, Cousin," said he, contemptuously, "that you've spent hours with ermined lords and ladies long before this one was thought of. It shows the bias of your mind, so perhaps it's as well as it is. In the dairy a *lady* is out of place."

"And so is a farmer's wife, Cousin, if she can keep maids to do the churning."

"A farmer's wife should be everywhere, Cousin."

"I hope you leave out the pig-market!" said she, tossing her head. Then she left him to seek such a wife if he would.

There was a deal of quiet endurance in the way Robert went up to the loft and filled the rack with hay, and did other work there was no need for him to do, relieving his breast of that choking weight. Even when most out of temper with her he would have melted if she had spoken reproachfully.

And when from the loft he saw her going towards James and Charles, he felt keenly for his brothers. "It's their turn now," he said, with a grim smile, while he shut the opening, as though to keep her well out of sight.

The stockman was feeding the calves with field beet and swedes ; the brothers stood by, looking at some beautiful Ayrshire cows recently bought, when Louise interrupted their conference.

She came between them putting a hand on an arm of each, and looking up to their kind faces, asked, " And how are the calves, especially my beauty ? " This was in allusion to a snowy creature, around whose neck she had been pleased to place a piece of ribbon. She went and stroked it, at which it lifted its nose to be kissed ; but she patted it angrily because it had rumpled its ribbon.

The farmers sent the man about some other work. Then James asked, " How does our pretty one this day ? "

" Oh, bother, you talk like a Quaker ! It will be ' thee ' and ' thou ' shortly ; and I don't like it at all. "

Rebuffed, Mr James drew back. He was too noble a fellow to follow up a disadvantage, and in entire sympathy with Charles, who he hoped would do better.

" I've been looking all over the land for you. An Italian was round with white mice, and I bought a cage. " And Charles looked sanguine saying this. She stood with large open eyes full of rapturous pleasure. " You are a dear ! " she cried breathlessly, forgetting all about her distasteful mission.

Charles went to the stables ; he had stowed the captives in the harness-room for safety ; he brought them to her, and great was her ecstasy of delight. James said to himself, " If an Italian comes round with black rats, I'll try my luck with some ! "

Louise turned with dainty candour to Mr Charles, and became very serious. " You wouldn't have done this if you had known what I came to tell you. "

They looked up swiftly, almost breathing the ill news.

" I am going to leave you ! " then she turned very red with sad perplexity.

" You—going—to—leave—us ! " murmured James, unable to realize all that meant ; for broad meadows would then hold no sunshine, and the long earth become of mourning sombreness.

She nodded, stooping to the cage to cover her confusion. Charles turned away—he had not the heart to ask further what she meant.

“Your wretched little cousin is to become a great lady, and live away at some distant Towers.” They knew then!

Her voice was vibrating with tenderness. Without looking up she put forth her hand, as if to conjure forgiveness and good wishes. James, with his usual large-souled completeness of character, took and pressed it fervently, saying, “I hope you may be very happy, Louise. For any little misunderstandings we have had I entreat your pardon.”

At that she started impetuously, and showered kisses upon his hand; then ran away.

Charles went out, his head was bent low, and the men at work said, “How Master Charles do be ageing, to be sure!”

Louise went and hid herself in her favourite resort, amongst those ermine-bordered heroes and the fairy world she had taken the pains to raise about her in the sweet summer months when she gloried in her childhood. The place looked bare now; those tinselled figures seemed contemptible; she saw them through the veil of others’ sorrow, and her heart was naturally too tender not to feel deeply for them.

Lord Gascoyne meanwhile had transfixed the surprised farmer, and with ardent eloquence defended his suit. The plea, as he put it, was irresistible. It would be a trial parting with Louise, still her uncle could not but feel proud of the brilliant prospect in store for her.

“And you give your consent, Mr Clark?”

“Well, you see I’m obliged, because it would be no possible use objecting if Louise has set her mind on it.”

“Why qualify your sanction in that way? Does the marriage receive your sincere approval?”

“It does; and God bless you both!”

Nothing could be better than that.

CHAPTER XVI.

BRINGING HOME THE BRIDE TO BEECHESTER TOWERS.

THE announcement given below brought together a goodly assembly of the great people of Beechester, truly desirous of shining in the opinion of Lord Gascoyne, who, whether as landlord or customer, was held in the most considerate regard.

BOROUGH OF BEECHESTER.

JOHNSON, *MAYOR*.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that a PUBLIC MEETING of the Inhabitants of the Borough of Beechester will be held at the TOWN HALL, on MONDAY NEXT, February 12th, at Twelve o'clock, Noon, precisely, to consider the ARRANGEMENTS for a suitable CELEBRATION upon the bringing home of a BRIDE to BEECHESTER TOWERS, and to take such steps in the matter as the Meeting may deem expedient.

NATHAN FINEJOY,
Town-Clerk.

TOWN HALL,
Dated this 5th day of February.

It was thought fortunate that so energetic and cultured a man filled the highest seat of municipal office. If the townspeople had felt confidence in one alderman more than another, it was certainly in Samuel Johnson, Esq., LL.D., Adviser-in-Chief; and when that truly great man assumed the robes

of office, it was generally believed that their enlightened borough would enjoy government of the most illumined order. It proved so. The ex-mayor had been a little hard of hearing. The present mayor heard a little too much. He was everywhere, all over the borough; was called in with greater regularity than ever; and his advice was of augmented importance for the additional dignity of the mayoralty. In this matter of the forthcoming festivities the town was satisfied that he would arrange everything in such a manner that the record would increase the already high reputation of their borough for loyalty and courtliness. He made, indeed, a splendid speech at the meeting, but owing to that unfortunate infirmity of Coleman Dukes, Esq., it was, to some extent, spoiled when spoken of afterwards. We print as a specimen a few extracts of the ex-mayor's account of the speech, parallel with the words really uttered by the cultured Dr Johnson:—

For after all, the sign of our
refinement is an union, the
head and front of the filial be-
fore us cannot surpass that.
Herein recent events seem
focalised for the opportunity
to revile.
Receiving all with whom he
came in contact with a grace
peculiarly his own, not above
farming friends or those in trade,
his lordship's conduct will long
be remembered in the
county.
I venture to remind
you that sweet ballad
singing increases the
expense.
At a former interesting
occasion the excitement
was immense; then came
reduction of the whirl;
some walked away, some
stayed.
We know what the world

For after all, the sign of our
refinement is an onion, the
head and front of the Belial be-
fore us cannot surpass that.
Here indecent events seem
vocalised for the opportunity
to defile.
Deceiving all with whom he
came in contact with a grace
peculiarly his own, not above
harming friends or those in trade,
his lordship's conduct will long
be remembered in the
county.
I venture to remind
you that street-ballad
singing increases the
suspense.
At a former interesting
occasion the excitement
was intense; then came
seduction of the girl;
some talked away, some
prayed!
We know what the world

has come to—cursing the
governors, with the power
of deposing, undeterred
by scruples. . . .
The whole feast is an
internal example of what
Beechesteer can do when
on its mettle.

has come to—nursing the
governess, with the power
of reposing, undisturbed
by pupila. . . .
The old beast is an
infernal sample of what
Beechesteer can do when
on its mettle.

The atrocious report was taken down in shorthand by Mr Coleman Dukes, and it emphatically added to his reputation. The chief person inconvenienced thereby was of course the learned speaker, who had felt specially anxious to shine in the opinion of his lordship upon this memorable occasion. How he shone may be imagined.

It was the opinion of Dr Johnson that his dear friend Coleman Dukes ought to be suppressed, or at all events restrained from indulging in any more of these frisky reports.

The provoking part of it was, that Mr Dukes performed his dreadful blunders in entire innocence. A more amiable citizen did not exist. It was his conscientious desire to present a faithful report of all proceedings, that betrayed him into these little discrepancies. For years he had been a hard-working member of the town council, with no other reward than hearing himself talk, but if he caught his own utterance with the irregularity in which he listened to others, there could be no large pleasure attached to that.

The noble burgesses of Beechesteer honoured their associate, first for his wealth, next for his work, and thirdly for his enlightenment: and no man bore him ill-will because of the physical defect which harried the speakers.

At a powerful oration, delivered by Miss Jochebed Sneezee in the Lecture-theatre, he rendered this remark of the chairman in reference,—“*with impassioned fluency to quieter tones,*” as “*with impassioned fluency to quiet her bones!*” It caused such a shock of surprise that a ladies’ deputation of great intelligence waited privately upon Mrs Coleman Dukes, and begged the intervention of her interest, to the extent of prevailing upon Mr Dukes to consent that a consultation of



aurists should be held. Mrs Dukes, who thought that, with the exception of being a little long, her husband's ears were satisfactory, declined to move in the matter, and the dear friends withdrew disappointed. One of them, who had fancied herself slighted when the Mayoress was in the height of her dignity, went so far as to say in confidence that she believed there was something in it. Pressed with the greatest delicacy to explain, she, with the greatest delicacy assented, and communicated an astounding suspicion, based upon fact. The fact was, that Mrs Dukes had once played in an amateur performance the wicked Queen in Hamlet; and the awful suspicion, disclosed in great confidence, amounted to a pretty strong belief that Mrs Coleman Dukes had been dropping some noxious compound into Mr Coleman Dukes's ears! Naturally this grave charge caused a thrill of horror, and the ex-mayoress was regarded with prejudice. It was no use for Mrs Dr Johnson to say in channels where it was sure to travel in the right direction, that Mrs Dukes was possessed of every womanly grace and accomplishment; it did not counteract the venom of the other party. And to make things worse, a monster arose amongst the males, who affirmed it as his opinion that Coleman Dukes was SHAMMING for the purpose of disseminating vindictive and disparaging comment. Altogether there was some likelihood of Beechester being converted into a bear-garden, and of the town council fulfilling the traditions of town councils generally. Here stepped in that godly person, Jonadab Sneezer, whose devout authority invariably exerted pacification.

This prophet called an afternoon prayer-meeting in the Town Hall at three o'clock, and having brought his lantern-jaws to request that the twopenny hymn-books should not be taken from the seats, he gave out the praise, "Why do the heathen rage," when immediately the gaunt Jochebed darted up and commenced its transcript into that screech she was pleased to call song. The sanctimonious few assembled to pray for peace joined in harmonizing the heathen. With a twopenny hymn-book, held away at the end of her long arm, Jochebed beat solemn time, prancing its measure slowly with

one bony knee. Jonadab's pious eyes were uplifted to the dirty ceiling, and he was engaged in his usual rapt ecstasy when he knocked the water-bottle off the red baize, to the imminent discomfort of a prim admirer below into whose lap it rolled and discharged its contents. Jochebed covered the confusion by emitting piercing notes which sufficiently distracted attention from the accident. Then the sublime couple interceded for the peace of Beechester, with especially fervid mention of those slandered for righteousness' sake, which was two for themselves and one for Coleman Dukes, since that gentleman laid no particular claim to holiness. Integrity, morality, and intellect, formed Coleman's stock of excellent qualities. He never believed it possible that grace would illuminate so conspicuously two individuals of any borough.

This was the state of things, when the Mayor called the meeting with which this chapter opened, where Dukes put his foot in it more effectually than ever; so effectually, indeed, it seemed doubtful if he ever would get his foot out again. Even his partisan, Jonadab, was very shocked; while Jochebed moaned for a week. Mrs Dukes, with spirit, said she had no doubt but that every word was true, and admired her husband for speaking out like a man!

Poor Dukes had no intention of passing as the originator of the repulsive sentiments, and left home for a few days' change.

At the earnest solicitation of the respected Mayor, Mr Jonadab Sneezer consented to wait upon the inhabitants, with the object of inviting co-operation. The inhabitants did not, all of them, take kindly to this emissary; and in more than one instance he was shown to the door without any waste of politeness. Under these circumstances, Sneezer had a manner of surviving it peculiar to himself; he would stand solemnly upon the mat, elongate his preternaturally long face, glance sanctimoniously upward, and wipe the dust of that house from off his feet. But as a rule people contributed a donation of some kind, and as quickly as possible, much upon the principle they would have employed in bribing the Evil One to peace and immediate disappearance. Jonadab laboured under the disadvantage of not being a general favourite, be-

yond the scientific circle of which he was the pride and ornament. Nevertheless, Beechester without Jonadab Sneezer would have been as great an anomaly as Beechester without Dr Johnson. The two represented and individualized the prominent branches of thought: Johnson was at the head of the active element, Sneezer at that of devout philosophy. Of course when some irascible person pronounced the one an officious meddler, and the other a grotesque hypocrite, it went for absolutely nothing. There have always been disagreeable persons on the outskirts of the community, envious of the superior attainments of the distinguished and illustrious. The only man Dr Johnson really stood in awe of was Coleman Dukes, and after that worthy's achievements it is not surprising. Sneezer also held a being in gruesome veneration—it was Sir Toodleum Tummytot. And Jonadab professed to have prayed for that vulgarian more than for any man in Christendom.

Jonadab did not call upon Sir Toodleum for his subscription towards the object engaging attention; nor upon Goldworthy Price the banker. This gentleman interested himself more closely than ever in the elevating science of chrematistics: even his dry hard skin was yellowing with its association. Old Dekker has set it down that—

“When all sins are old in us,
And go upon crutches, covetousness
Does but then lie in her cradle.”

A guest of some notability was staying at Beech Park, a person who expressed exceedingly slight veneration for the lord of Beechester Towers or any other lord. This was a landed proprietor of greedy proclivities from Lincolnshire, rejoicing in the name of Gobble; and he and the banker got on well together, for they were alike in their rasping, grasping grip on wealth. There was this difference between them, Goldworthy Price hoarded, William Gobble spent—upon himself. A gross combination of carnal enjoyment and selfishness, the owner of the broad acres known as Gobble Drakes, lived only in the edible part of this world. From morning

to night he was tasting this and tasting that, and generally patching up his system for the reception of more. A great valetudinarian, William Gobble bore one persistent grudge—that he had not been endowed with a more comprehensive stomach. Having money with which to buy everything, he was greatly concerned because they disagreed. Not an epicure, he literally gobbled up everything that came in his way. The man's voracity was a revelation,—it astonished himself; he would bring his hand down heartily on his knee, with "Try again, old fellow!" and he did, until nothing remained. The first day at dinner Miss Cramp and Miss Cramp's Mamma were so thunderstruck at the devastation amongst the dishes, that they neglected their own nourishment and sat gasping before his insatiableness; until, catching him casting hungry glances at their own poor tit-bits, they made haste to demolish them before the gluttonous old fellow could pounce on the elegant dinner-plates set before them. Miss Cramp and Mamma, it will be seen by this, were not yet gone; having an eligible tenant in their house at Bath, they kindly continued to give the banker the benefit of their company. As visitors, indeed, their confidence was without a parallel; it seemed doubtful if their stay would ever come to an end.

When Mr Gobble of Gobble Drakes appeared, these ladies did not like it at all. They had an affectionate eye (for his dear mother's sake) on the Goldworthy Price exchequer; and the enormous supplies of food required made a serious draw upon it, they were well convinced. Their cool exterior towards him did not abate his ardour, he merely looked over his bloated cheeks as though he could devour *them* if properly smoked.

The palate of William Gobble was so constructed that he could not talk while eating—moreover, he was unwilling to lose a mouthful. He sat silent, save for the plying of knife, fork, and spoon, like lightning, often darting a glance right and left to see how far in advance of the others he could possibly keep.

The estate of which he was the possessor had been prodigal in rich production, but he had eaten the land as bare as

though a gigantic locust. Fruit, vegetables, cattle, sheep, and pigs; fish, birds, poultry, everything, to the very fungi, had assed from Gobble Drakes to satisfy the awful appetite of a hearty master. Immediately around, in the cottage-gardens and market-fields of the peasantry, there was a little famine, all the provender being needed to supply the unappeasable raving of the ravenous landlord. Miss Cramp, who said very harsh things at times, told her Mamma that she believed Mr Gobble, having ravaged Lincolnshire, was about to lay waste the remainder of England. Her Mamma contented herself with looking hard and wonderingly at him through her glasses. He was as full of enjoyment as Aristippus, and as ensuously careless of everything not immediately connected with the pleasure of living.

The approaching festivities in the town came up for discussion one day after dinner, and Mr Gobble, with difficulty, succeeded in passing a remark: "It's a mistake — makes people eat; and those like myself who really need food have to go short!"

Miss Cramp put on her glasses, stared frigidly at his puffy red face, and said with icy politeness, "You surely do not lay claim to the entire provisions, Mr Gobble?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do!" Mr Gobble glutinously corrected her; "from the first strawberry to the last of the kidneys."

Miss Cramp's Mamma averted her head in disgust. Mr Gobble, with aldermanic prominence of the organs of appetite and relishing smacking of the lips, leaned back in his chair with closed eyes, a favourite attitude of enjoyment when packed to the utmost tension. Miss Cramp, who had always prided herself on her own good health, could not but watch this animal-like individual with intense repugnance; yet so potent is money, it reduced even this prize-person's repulsiveness; and that Gobble had money, much money, Miss Cramp's Mamma knew well; the exquisite significance of the following remark will therefore become apparent: "My daughter is perhaps the most dainty preparer of *recherche* dishes possible to imagine!"

"Then I wish to goodness she'd give us the benefit of it at

the Drakes!" saying this lusciously, the fat man by degrees opened his eyes, and sighed deeply with the ecstasy of the thought of it. The much-enduring banker would not lose this opportunity—another might never present itself.

"I am sure," said he, briskly, "if you could only get Miss Cramp you would never consent to part with her."

Mr Gobble in a gastriloquy remarked that it would depend upon the lady's proficiency in the art described; that he liked any one to give up their whole time to it and think of nothing else. This elevated order of existence apparently was not displeasing to Miss Cramp, or she had caught the cue and kept her thoughts to herself.

"You shall come and stop with me, my dear!" said the gormandizer paternally.

"Miss Cramp never visits without her Mamma," put in Mr Price, kindly.

"Oh dear, no!" the Mamma confirmed.

"Come as well," grunted the high liver. "Somersetshire people, I understand, are adepts in the kitchen."

This being settled, the banker pleasantly remarked, "High day and gala, I suspect, when his lordship does return."

"And who is the bride?" inquired Miss Cramp, pursing her lips.

"Well, there seems to be a little doubt," answered the banker. "Dr Johnson was saying she belongs to a very old Suffolk family; but I did hear, on the other hand, that she is only a farmer's daughter!"

"If there is so much uncertainty about it, I should be inclined to think she is not of much account." Thus Miss Cramp.

"Very odd nothing was heard of it until quite recently; no runaway affair, I do hope." Thus the Mamma.

"That's no object, so long as the digestion is right." It is needless to say this sentiment emanated from the richly endowed individual.

"For my part, I should place the dowry a little prominent," the banker ventured to interpose, wiping his yellow lips with a gold-coloured silk handkerchief.

"Is she young?" asked Miss Cramp.

"A mere child, Dr Johnson was saying," replied the banker. And the elderly maiden lady was very shocked.

"I don't know what this country is coming to," observed Miss Cramp's Mamma, severely. "When I was a girl such a thing wouldn't have been thought of."

The mouth of William Gobble opened slowly; oppressive silence prevailed; it was felt some more than usually weighty observation was about to fall from those overlapping lips. It fell, addressed to Miss Cramp.

"I can't say, if I was a cannibal, I should prefer yourself, ma'am!"

The lady gave vent to a piercing exclamation.

The outrageous remark caused them both to look unspeakable things at the gentleman who was enjoying himself.

There was a pause while they were recovering, during which Mr Gobble seemed to be gone off to sleep.

"Did Dr Johnson say if he knew where her *trousseau* was to be bought?" asked the Mamma with interest.

"There runs a rumour that she is a peculiar young lady, and will have neither *trousseau* nor ceremony——"

"No ceremony?" cried the Mamma, galvanized.

"I beg your pardon—don't misunderstand me—I meant in the way of form——"

"I was going to say! But this is very strange; do you think, or does the Doctor think, that she is a little deranged?"

"Oh dear, no! quite the contrary. The Doctor said, that from what he could gather, she would soon set Beechester to rights if it obtruded itself."

"My patience!" exclaimed Miss Cramp indignantly, "that's pretty, too. Well, I hope she may have it taken out of her."

"Perhaps the Sneezers will call," said the banker, with a malicious little laugh to himself.

"Don't mention sneezing," said Gobble, waking up; "it takes so much time. I never use pepper in case of it."

"No, no," the banker mildly explained, with a withered smile; "I was referring to neighbours of ours."

"Got some Sneezers down our way; awful people to eat."

They dined at the Drakes one day, but I'll take care they don't come again."

"Ah! these people belong to a different race, and are spiritually-minded, or so they give out. I should like you to see them."

"I don't want to waste time looking at people; it's the duty of creatures on this earth to use sight for a better purpose—looking for food. The only being interesting to me is the *chef*."

"A highly important functionary, I believe. But I do very little in that way; my life has been such a busy one, I've had no time to think about it; indeed it's only since I came to the Park that I've indulged in dinners at all."

Mr Gobble looked at his benighted friend with pity.

"It reminds me that, by the wish of the coming young lady, a DINNER is to be given to the poor of the town; and Dr Johnson did say an ox was to be roasted whole."

Mr Gobble lifted his fat hands with an air of entreaty, the fat fingers in protest, like two rows of pork sausages standing on end. "I never heard of such wicked waste in my life! Serve 'em right if they come to want! And that will be next day,—not a sirloin to be got!" And he inwardly determined he would waddle back to the Fens before the pinch came.

"And also by the young lady's desire, Dr Johnson tells me there is to be a TEA given to all the school-children."

"Mercy on us!" ejaculated Miss Cramp's Mamma; "what next? A tea indeed! I should have thought a halfpenny bun each would have been quite sufficient!"

"If I hate one thing more than another in this fidgety world," said Mr Price, sternly, "it's juveniles. The noise they make distracts me; they are always running under the horses, my coachman complains; they break the bank windows with stones and bits of wood; trundle their hoops so as to trip me up, and are at the bottom of the orange-peel danger; they chalk about on everything; wear masks and hideous disfigurements; and rob the orchards; while their laughing and shouting and general demeanour is singularly improper in a country affecting decorum."

"I agree with you," said Miss Cramp, cordially. "They are an unmitigated nuisance, and ought to be repressed instead of encouraged by tea-giving."

"I think they're very handy," murmured Mr Gobble, drowsily; "they fetch things from the shops so much quicker than grown-up people, and when every minute is of consequence that is important. I employ some scores round about the Drakes, simply for running of errands,—and it's astonishing how cheaply they do it."

"Dr Johnson informed me the future Lady Gascoyne had also made arrangements for a liberal SUPPER, to be given to the *employés* and assistants of the shops and warehouses; to finish up with a tradesmen's ball, for which the Quadrille Band has been engaged."

"That's worse than anything yet!" cried Miss Cramp. "The young people in the shops are quite impudent enough, without being made more so by suppers."

"And we can fancy what a tradesmen's ball must be like!" said Miss Cramp's Mamma, in shocked surprise.

"Our friend Sneezer did oppose it," answered the wealthy banker, "on the score of morality and worldly-mindedness. But the young lady sent him a telegram, through his lordship, to say that if the Supper and Ball were not held in the town, she would invite every one of them to the Towers! Sneezer called a prayer-meeting for her conversion, and I do hear that he will hold a Mission during the day of the festivities. I suppose you know the town is to be illuminated?"

"No! You don't say so?"

"Yes! That's a pretty expense, isn't it? And the rate-payers—the rate-payers, mind—will be called upon to bear the cost of it. And this is supposed to be a free country. There is also to be a grand display of fireworks, the Doctor understands, on the high ground near the Towers, for the entertainment of the Workhouse."

The ladies rose. Fortitude has its limits, and when it comes to fireworks for the entertainment of the inmates of a workhouse, it is quite time to retire.

Alderman Gobble slept calmly; he had been unable to keep pace with the gossips.

Goldworthy Price never slept before bed-time, not then very often. He now went to an escritoire and was soon deep in figures.

It is gratifying, if not exhilarating, to turn from this sordidness to the high-minded Jochebed Sneezer's efforts in behalf of a proper celebration of the day.

It had occurred to this admirable woman that a presentation from the ladies of Beechester to the bride, would be a happy undertaking, and she summoned such of her friends as were proved in grace and qualified by wisdom to consider the matter.

They met in the Mothers' Room, sixteen of them, sitting in line at the board under lighting from two dim gas-burners; and a fantastic gathering it looked.

Pinched-in faces, sharp and ill-natured, with high foreheads and straggling wisps of frizzled hair; keen, shrewd faces, rendered keener and shrewder by piercing little eyes glittering with vindictive inquisitiveness; grim and morose old faces, shadowed by the blues, and dismally mournful; flabby, flattened faces, that might have been sat upon and were but just springing into shape again; deadly pale faces, which might have trooped out from some cellars, after that mildly exciting pursuit, watching mushrooms grow; faces of sharp haters, of vigorous hunters of scandal, of masculine orders of mind, of those sworn to redeem society.

And of this band, by right of extra grace and wisdom, Jochebed was chief. Industry was the watchword, and each lady brought her work.

"Friends!" commenced Miss Sneezer, rapping with her iron thimble on the board. "We are met to consider. First let us meditate."

At that each ghastly pair of eyes was directed to the ceiling, and the meeting engaged in meditation.

Then the sublime leader coughed in a lowly manner, and with humility took up some calico and resumed work. As soon as the other ladies had done so she spoke again with plainness and point. "I wish to put before you the project of

honouring Lady Gascoyne with an address and presentation from the ladies of Beechester."

One of the ladies at the lower end of the board pricked her long nose while attempting to bite off the cotton she was working with, and mumbling the anathema proper to a needlewoman it attracted the leader's attention.

"Our sister would advance a proposition?"

"I was about to ask what form the presentation is to take?" said our sister.

"Certainly; very pleased you put the question; we have now to deliberate upon it. I may lead the discussion by mentioning that Mr Jonadab thought the bound volumes of our Scientific Researches would prove acceptable; or if not that, the entire series of our 'Plates of the Bugs of Beechester'!"

Grave silence greeted this proposal, while the ladies deliberated.

Another spoke. "The Minutes of our Mothers' Meetings might put appropriate and charitable thoughts into our dear young sister's head."

As this speaker's remark would bear more constructions than one, there was silence again. One thing was certain, it appeared a breach of compliment, so far as the Sneezers were concerned, and Jochebed rolled her yellow eyes angrily.

A virgin, illuminated after the mediæval manner, darted her head up, and wagging it excitedly, broke forth into this: "My love" (to the leader), "and you, my dears" (to the followers), "coming before you, as I do, meekly conscious of inability, yet strengthened from within, I entreat your forbearance, while I solicit your attention. Our town, pre-eminent in its enlightenment, should be eager in its usefulness, and have regard to service while duly seeking ornament and beauty; the choice of presents artistically pleasing and intrinsically valuable is extensive, and we may well pause reflectively before the variety open to selection. Yet, in spite of this, I think the object I propose will command your unqualified support, and I venture to submit,—A Soap-dish!"

The ladies worked on, sound of their sewing the only comment.

A noise of smothered groaning was heard at the centre of the board.

It was the reverberation of a long-drawn idea. The proprietor of the groaning extracted the idea: "Jochebed Sneezer, and Friends,—You know that our secular devotion takes literary form. What do you say to the Book of Martyrs bound in black and white pigskin?"

One said that she scarcely thought it appropriate for a wedding present.

"No," chimed in the lady next to her. "A little something in the way of jewellery, I believe, is a more customary presentation."

"When you say, 'A little something,' what do you wish to indicate, my dear?" asked Miss Sneezer, rather severely.

"I had scarcely thought of what. Some wiser head than mine will suggest." So saying, the speaker diffidently retired within herself.

"A Copper foot-warmer would be very nice," ventured a sister who had evidently not been paying attention.

Miss Sneezer, with energy, rapped to order. A sensitive member shed tears. Another, who in some past epoch had belonged to the giddy world, and whose communications were usually received with caution, now proposed, "A Bouquet-holder set with precious stones!"

Miss Sneezer, who hated flowers, and everything else that was beautiful, impatiently reminded the meeting that her time was valuable, and that it was being wasted over puerile subjects. If her former proposal was not acceptable to assembled friends, she would submit another—an Album, to contain portraits of those present at this meeting; and as representative of the Ladies of Beechesteer, she thought it could not but afford Lady Gascoyne the greatest possible pleasure.

A chorus of approval arose from friends present, and so flattering was the reception of this last proposal, it was carried without opposition.

What the sportive Louise would say to the gallery may be faintly supposed. A more characteristic collection could

scarcely have been arranged. Representing the mind (rather than the beauty) of Beechester, it would, of course, possess value of a lasting kind.

The meeting was upon the eve of breaking up when a head of superb intellectual development was put in at the door, and that indefatigable worthy, Dr Samuel Johnson, greeted the company with ponderous geniality: "Heard you were here; just looked in to say, 'How do you do?—hope all are well?'" The Doctor entered pleasantly and shook hands all round.

Every one was glad to see him, for he was the prince of gossips, and when he had nothing to tell would always listen.

The Doctor sat down to the right of the saintly Jochebed.

"Well, and what is upon the *tapis*?—something loyal, I hope?" asked the Doctor, briskly.

Miss Sneezer lowered her voice, and with a smile that amongst the carnally-minded would have been described as a simpering one, she confided, "It's a *great* secret; you won't say a word, now promise me?" pleadingly.

"Upon my honour." With his hand upon his heart.

Each member knew it would be revealed five minutes after he had left the meeting.

"We are going to present our Photographs in a volume to her ladyship."

Dr Johnson looked the line along with a grave momentary inspection of each remarkable face, full or profile, according as it was presented; then after studious consideration expressed his opinion. "I think this tribute of affection is very pathetic; very. It is difficult to realize her ladyship's emotion upon receipt of it. A more happy resolution could not have been framed. I need not ask whose brighter genius created this delightful surprise for Lady Gascoyne. I congratulate you!" Turning abruptly towards the lady upon whose face the conscious genius simpered, he cordially shook her by the hand. "Now," said the Doctor, affably, "let me give you a little piece of advice, all in a friendly way, you know, and as a sincere well-wisher to this noble project."

Then each lady listened with enthusiasm to the Adviser-in-Chief to Beechester and neighbourhood.

"It seems to me that a gift of this magnitude should be introduced in a befitting manner, worthy of the presentation and those interested, and a semi-official form would be the most gratifying to the town and the recipients. Now I hate to put myself forward in any way, but this year I can shrink behind the screen of office, and help in the name of the Corporation. Miss Sneezer, I shall feel great pleasure in presenting Lady Gascoyne with the delicate souvenir."

But Jochebed had already, in council with Jonadab, arranged that they should call in company upon Lord and Lady Gascoyne, and themselves present the gift decided upon.

Dr Johnson felt that both he and the whole municipal body were plucked in the most disagreeable manner, and he fitteth thence to carry advice where it would be more acceptable, and arouse the inhabitants with the latest bit of news.

While this was proceeding, that leader of the barbarians, Sir Toodleum Tummytot, expressed his opinion to a few congenial souls upon the excitement prevalent. Others, however, made more active preparation. And it is a fortunate thing for events of importance that while there are good folk who talk, there are others to work.

When the day came, an unusual stir at Beechester station aroused the interest of strangers. Along the arrival platform were shrubs in green tubs, kindly lent for the occasion. A banner, bearing the Gascoyne crest and motto, was hanging from the iron girders. The entrance to the waiting-room was surmounted by a half-circle bearing a cheering "WELCOME." The interior was decorated with flowers, and was kept private for the Corporation, who would there await his lordship for the purpose of offering him congratulations. Outside the station his lordship's horses were to be found caparisoned with white satin bows. A band of music was stationed to the right; this it was arranged would perform a Wedding March, composed expressly by the Mayoress. To the left were lines of the poor of Beechester, from the almshouses, and other interesting places, who were to discharge blessings as the party drove off. Four private carriages waiting beyond would convey the leading municipal gentlemen,

acting as an escort. As the procession would move slowly and with state past the Market Square, the gun taken at Inkerman was to be fired, but no man could be found to approach it. On passing the old church the bells were to ring a joyous peal. As it drove down High Street, triumphal arches and flags and bunting would enchant the eye. Decorated balconies, wherein the fair matrons of Beechesteer; and upper windows, whereat the enrapt domestics. The streets would be many-peopled by eager spectators; and the reception would, it was hoped, surprise and gladden the approaching noble pair. When passing the Green just beyond the town, school-children were to burst forth into sweet rejoicing; and further along, where the road wound upward to the Towers, little girls with baskets would strew flowers in their path. Upon reaching the mansion of the Gascoynes, the servants of the family, marshalled at the entrance, would raise a loyal shout when their lord and lady appeared. And this enthusiastic incident would complete the history of their progress.

Singularly well managed as was this great festivity, it was yet felt to be mean compared with the way in which every one would have carried it out had it been left to themselves.

As the time drew near for the arrival, the platform was cleared as far as possible, and a carpet laid down. The large and eager crowd assembled outside the barriers watched this preparation with awe. Beechesteer police, brushed up and full of Beechesteer bounce, kept back the people. The head officials of the station, the Mayor, his chaplain, and one or two private gentlemen of position and importance, were to receive the distinguished party upon the platform, and conduct them to the members of the Corporation in the waiting-room. It will thus be seen that strict ceremony was to characterise the proceedings.

As the minutes slowly passed, the breathless excitement increased, and anxious looks traversed the smooth grey line, hoping for a glimpse of the approaching train. It was seen at last, describing the curve of rails, and steaming proudly in.

When the train had stopped, and his lordship's compartment was found, the gentlemen stood on one side, while the

Mayor gave her ladyship greeting. Those around were intently observing her, and a feeling of admiration thrilled all. Louise had never looked more sparkling; her youthful loveliness and careless *naïveté* were something fresh in that region of prudes and prigs; they gave her the homage of sincere admiration in their hearts, whatever might be said upon the lips.

When Lord Gascoyne saw what they were in for, his annoyance was extreme; but thinking it might amuse his bride, he contrived to preserve a pleasant manner. Louise felt wickedly inclined to laugh, and still more inclined to run and leap the barriers, but something told her she must be good and ladylike before all these people; so she controlled her mischievous vivacity. The band of music, and regiment of poor old pensioners caused her merriment; but she felt sorry for it afterwards, and promised them in her heart a pound of tea each.

With her advent, Heart did really enter into Beechester, but the poor were long before they could believe it.

The procession was a success. Passing down High Street the Mayor bowed repeatedly; since his lordship sat back in his carriage, he thought it his duty; and his vanity was touched. Those lines of faces, those tiers of Beechester's worthiest, he had advised with them nearly all in matters of delicacy. And lo! at a balcony he espied his loving wife, and not John Gilpin's heart itself was more stirred by swift events.

Passing the Green, the buckram-like Corporation were astounded to see Lady Gascoyne stand up in the carriage, and take several handfuls of loose sweets from her pocket which she threw to the children, who lost their prim order in a scramble.

At the gates the climax of the ludicrous awaited them in sublime form. The ghastly-looking Jonadab was upon one side, and Jochebed at the other. The pair held tracts and pamphlets which they tossed into the carriage as the party drove past; then lifted up their voices in song—the Song of Solomon.

And thus eventfully was the bride brought home to Beechester Towers. The retinue of servants and imposing dimensions of her lord's country home at first abashed Louise; but

thanks to the confidence she possessed in plenty, and the spirit with which she accepted position, this feeling in time wore off, and she took her place gracefully as the mistress of the household and a lady of the county. Her youth and pretty ways, now that they were toned down, won all hearts, and her beauty caused the men to envy Gascoyne, while the women wondered what he could have been about not to select from themselves, where there was so much greater attraction, instead of going so far afield. After which little grumble they were prepared to take and cherish the new-comer, and make much of her. Louise, who had a decided objection to being taken and cherished, threw a damp upon this second-rate affection by declining to visit or be fostered in any way. She confined attention to the house, and set all her heart upon her husband. She asked for no alien affection, and permitted no poisoned compliment to enter there. "And altogether," wrote Lord Gascoyne to his friend Nugent, "I might have done worse than marry a wood nymph."

CHAPTER XVII.

ADA.

Mrs LILLINGSTON was very bad, very bad indeed.

There was no doing anything with her.

That respected gentleman her husband told her it was all fancy.

This made her worse; she moaned for sympathy, and there was none.

The enduring governess was ever by—patiently kind, willing to do, anxious to please.

It was not enough for the lady, who said Miss Sylvester was as unfeeling as her husband.

Hard on both—the governess was all feeling; the husband was never at home to manifest it.

The children disturbed their mamma very much. Their number was uncertain; but it always appeared as though a regiment of soldiers was billeted on the premises. She was kept in a quivering state of sensibility. Which worried her most, their tongues or their toes, would engage her speculation hourly: altogether she was a great sufferer.

A tall, thin lady; leaning forward, as with yearning to double up and have done with it.

Long curls each side of her face had once been auburn; but the auburn went red, and Mrs St Luke Lillingston went to the dyers—the end of it being, the curls became a ripe mouldy hue, not unbecoming, but a clear travesty on the colour the lady desired.

Worse than this, she declared the dye affected her nerves L

Owing to something metallic it was believed. There seemed a feeling as if her face was being compressed between boards: gradually an appearance of this sort was really presented, so much does imagination shape the countenance. The head of Mrs Lillingston bore all the semblance of having undergone an operation by pressure.

She wore a pyramidal arrangement of back-hair, that was always coming to pieces; the re-erecting of which fell to the lot of the governess, amongst sundry other performances.

A profusion of tortoise-shell combs assisted to keep Mrs Lillingston's head-piece together; but on account of their teeth irritating her, she was in the habit of snatching at them, and flinging them across the room, regardless of the emotion of visitors.

Whether Mrs Lillingston's head was over weighty for her neck to support, or was improperly balanced, is uncertain; but it was for ever jolting forward, and rolling one side or the other, as though about to tumble off. This perplexing and uncomfortable propensity alarmed many of the public, who darted off under the fearful idea they might be called upon to catch it.

When the compressed head went thus, and the long, scant curls dangled weirdly, it was the premonitory sign of exhaustion, which generally culminated in the "Spectrums."

The seizure by this mysterious malady was always a serious occurrence. While under its influence, the lady would roll indiscriminately on to the nearest article of furniture, and, grasping it convulsively, kick out with her toes and heels, venting a residue of ireful indignation upon any one unfortunately present.

Local medical men of repute had advised and prescribed unavailingly. They admitted the profession was baffled. One of them wrote to the 'Lancet,' learnedly and with marked ability, to prove the existence of a new disorder. Another privately gave it as his opinion that the lady had some time or other been bitten; the symptoms conclusively demonstrated a resemblance to hydrophobia. A third feared the patient had swallowed something alive—still living, serpentine, vicious,

carnivorous,—and it was the feeding times, said this alarmist, which so painfully discommoded the sufferer.

Everywhere men of science were canvassing the peculiar ailment of the Ipswich lady.

The faculty failed to get at the seat of the complaint. Mrs Lillingston had a horrid idea that they wanted to experiment upon her; and if approached, she would kick the venturesome practitioner violently upon the shins.

She was not to be coaxed, intimidated, nor soothed: and she hugged her forlorn article of furniture, as though it was the last spar of a wreck.

It was the custom of St Luke Lillingston, upon returning home, to ask how Mrs Lillingston was; and if informed of an attack of the “spectrums,” to go out again, until such time as he supposed his lady had recovered.

Mrs Lillingston was a believer in Patent Medicines, and tried them all, one after the other, as they came out. Mr Lillingston, who had never known a day’s illness in his life, could not understand it, and looked upon his wife as a woman of infinite courage, if not of infinite sense; but he believed that dissipation took various aspects.

Mrs Lillingston made a point of being troubled with something continually without a break or pause, the intervals between hysterics and the “spectrums” being filled by the fidgets.

One day, when the governess was out with her unruly string of pupils, visitors called,—of semi-official appearance, unknown to the servants, unlike any persons seen in Ipswich or neighbourhood.

They presented their compliments, and hoped Mrs Lillingston was a little better. As it happened, the lady did feel a little better upon that day; but after receiving this message of sympathy, immediately began to feel worse, and told the servant to say she was still very poorly.

They protested that it would give them pleasure to see Mrs Lillingston if convenient.

Mrs Lillingston despatched the reply that if they would kindly excuse the disorder, incidental to her companion being away from home, it was quite convenient.

They were ushered in, and then the lady knew consternation: her goblins and horrible spectres had taken form, and had cunningly obtained an entrance, no doubt to torment her.

It was the devoted Jonadab and sister, who, having heard of a mysterious ailment entirely new to science and inviting to inquiry, had journeyed hither to see what they could make out of it.

Their motives were philanthropic in the highest degree. They might do this poor creature good. It was a labour of love, and for the welfare of humanity, since every new disease should be taken in hand by some one at once; and seeing how this had baffled men of science, it would be a triumph of no ordinary kind if their visit proved successful.

A careful preliminary report had been prepared, and Jonadab hoped to read a valuable paper at their next conversazione.

Jochebed had privately informed Mrs Dr Johnson, that she had heard of a singular infirmity unknown to their sex, but with which they might at any moment be attacked if it was not repressed; and that she was about to start on a journey with the devout hope of repressing it. Mrs Dr Johnson said she thought their sex already possessed all the infirmities extant. Miss Sneezer did not quite know how to take this observation, but lifted her eyes, as she thought emotionally—really it imparted a ghastly effect.

The sublime couple departed with the best wishes of everybody, and received quite an ovation the evening before. It seemed consistent that Beechester should of all places depute competent professors to inquire into this extraordinary affliction. And the diagnosis of the learned Jonadab was looked forward to with more than the usual interest.

Travel had not added to the sublimity of their appearance. Jochebed's long sallow face was blue with the cold. Prevention being better than cure, she wore a black silk skull-cap under her bonnet, and it imparted peculiarity to her curiously-shaped head. A short, thick, pilot-jacket; sheep-skin gloves and the cudgel; short, thick skirts; and boots of agricultural massiveness;—the lady meant no nonsense when she went on her travels, and equipped herself sensibly.

Jonadab, weighted with the importance of their errand, was solemn and grim. His coat to his heels, closely buttoned, his broad-brimmed black felt hat, a roll of papers in black leather, and the sanctimonious gravity of his demeanour, so chilled the lady of irrepressible antics, she felt the evil influence exerting itself in defiance of all social etiquette, and even dreaded an attack of the very malady these two were privately anxious about.

Jonadab spoke first. "We have heard, madam, of your sufferings: we could not resist calling to express our sympathy. Having made pathology our study, it has enabled us to relieve humanity: we hope to restore you. Our scheme is independent of the faculty. We know more than the doctors; our interest is universal, theirs local. We relieve you of your pain; they relieve you of your purse! Our services are entirely gratuitous, in the interests of science. It will be evident to you, as my sister observed coming along, that no person has the right to go on suffering as you are doing, when the system may be entirely reconstituted. We are Jonadab and Jochebed Sneezer, Apostles of Humanity, and we come to cure you effectually! Our remedy——"

"Remedy!" cried Mrs Lillingston, excitedly—"I've tried all I could lay my hands on!"

"Ah, there you did wrong; it is necessary to exercise discretion. Now, my sister and myself do not prescribe; we advise—deal literally, not theoretically, with the basis of the complaint. Occasionally it is compulsory to resort to experiment——"

"Not here you won't, I can tell you!" It was the word she had been dreading; it confirmed her worst fears, and she armed herself defensively. Her excited state in no way disconcerted the visitors, who looked at one another meaningly, as much as to say it was coming on. The look exasperated the patient; she flushed angrily, and with sarcastic haste thanked them for calling;—adding, "I will not detain you longer; I am not strong enough to hold receptions."

"But we wish to see you stronger, my dear madam; many distant friends take an extraordinary interest in your state of

health. Sister" (to Miss Jochebed) "sing the soothing psalm you were singing coming down."

Miss Jochebed lifted up her voice accordingly. It failed to soothe the lady, however; indeed it had the contrary effect. She fidgeted uneasily, and made the most horrible grimaces. Miss Sneezer closed her eyes and sang louder. Jonadab drew nearer to the interesting patient whose agitation was stimulating. One of the maids, spying through the key-hole, thought the strange gentleman was mesmerising her mistress, and felt rather glad of it. She saw him walk briskly to her, but leap still more briskly back. The agile lady had dealt the investigator a vigorous kick on the shin. He limped to his attached companion, solemnly shook her by the hand, kissed her upon the cheek, sat down, and then they plunged into a doleful composition—words by Jonadab, music by Jochebed—wherewith they supported themselves when under persecution.

"This is a heathen household, sister," said the male, after terminating their chant.

"Our lines have fallen upon unregenerate ways, dear brother:" thus the female.

"But let us rejoice. We suffer in the cause of humanity." The male said this, and then they said "Amen" together.

Mrs Lillingston was not a very religious person, but she was not going to sit out burlesque of this sort, and without more ado caught up the poker and exclaimed in a rage, "Get out of this house! How did you dare to come into it?"

Her violence affrighted the votaries of science from their arrogant position. They believed the woman demented, and their lives were far too valuable in their own estimation to be rashly left in peril. Mrs Lillingston gave them to understand she was not a safe subject to be operated upon; and they retreated to make the most they could out of their disastrous defeat.

When Miss Sylvester came in she found the house in an uproar. The excited lady of it had smashed the furniture and broken the breakables, tumultuously screaming the while. She had the "spectrums" under a new and most passionate aspect. Upon Miss Sylvester walking calmly in to quell the disturb-

ance, if possible, Mrs Lillingston knocked over the chairs with sharper execution than ever.

"I declare if you walk about the house in that frigid manner you'll be the death of me. And I'll see you don't leave me alone again, my lady! Exposed to ruthless vivisectioners!"

As Ada had no knowledge of the cause of her perturbation she would not be likely to unriddle this fierce clamour; but she quietly picked up the chairs as Mrs Lillingston knocked them over, and confronted her frowns with the sweetest of looks.

"I only wish Mr Lillingston had been at home," mumbled that gentleman's wife; "he's always away when he's wanted."

It would have made it awkward for Jonadab had St Luke been there. Nobody on earth hated humbug with more righteous prejudice, and the sublime ones would not have been told the exact truth with more unvarnished plainness by Sir Toodleum Tummytot himself than by the blunt owner of Brunswick House.

Presently the much afflicted lady was clearly compelled to surrender to fatigue, and she sank back piteously entreating Miss Sylvester to rush for the sal volatile.

Miss Sylvester rushed as requested.

Anon the lady was brought to comparative rationalism, but seized with a sobbing fit, she lamented the inopportune time of this trying occurrence. "Just when I seemed to be getting a little better. I often wish I had your health and strength, Miss Sylvester."

When entering on her employment, Ada had thus communed: "I have heard that the life of a governess is one of hardship, I have read that it is a life of insult. So I must be prepared for these two things, and prayerfully strive with them, cultivating the extreme of patience by long-suffering forbearance, and then, surely, I shall have strength to endure."

It was a fine, sensible preparation; and if she happened to fall upon one of the most hard and insulting of spheres, it the more valuably applied the test. She came through it with a

moral excellence and a chastened courage that were divided by a very narrow line from heroism.

Few would have stayed in such a hotbed of sham ailments and extravagant affectations; less could have supported the unfeeling treatment and general depression.

From the date of that memorable journey to Ramsgate a still more confirmed gentleness and amiability had been observable in Ada Sylvester. It was attributed to satisfaction regarding her sister's change of home, and like most attributed things it was only partially correct. The truth was this—Ada did not, could not, forget that kind, chivalrous friend, whose interest in her sister, and whose appearance and manner, had so agreeably impressed her. There was dainty dwelling upon the recollection, eager looking for Daisy's letters, hunting these over for scraps concerning him, half-timid allusion when writing herself lest her secret should be fathomed,—letters written in fear of his fine eyes reading the lines and discovering the truth between them. Thus Ada was more quiet, more pensive than ever.

Because of it she had decided to decline visiting them, much as she wished to see Daisy. Ada belonged not to those who are governed by inclination. Without dallying frivolously with the fact made patent by her heart, she resolutely looked at it,—not with brazen but with modest verity, and sent it upon its way. Saul Weir might love, but it would never be a meek, insignificant being like herself, whose only longing was for some quiet and peaceful corner of England where she might do her best humbly and thankfully in that state of life unto which she was called. And Ada guessed, although not in our plain mode, that love was scarcely the fodder for a man like that, whatever women and the turtle-dove school might think about it.

It is the elegant do-nothings of slip-shod drawing-rooms who rush at a hero amorously, and afterwards join the confraternity of the blighted amazons.

No earnest man makes a trouble of petty grievances, and large sorrows are met with larger hopes. Similar masculine perfection dare not waste ardour and truth on idle fancies of

the fleeting hour, *but*, when the time comes to love, that also is on the same earnest, noble scale. And this it is which makes the love of such so valuable. It is the tyranny of the infinitely little that drags men down, and prevents their soaring to the infinitely great.

Miss Sylvester judged his character rightly, and while it made her admire him more, it stimulated her to the one safe course. Gracious truths are taught by disappointment, but she was taught so many gracious truths by other painful ordeals, she had no wish to add that to their number.

A governess takes honours in the training-school of severity;—a governess in love takes the first certificate for torture. And before Miss Sylvester will live on a barren rock of bitter disappointment she will forget him, or try to; will perform her duties cheerfully, and patiently submit to ebullitions of the “spectrums;” will minister to the young and the aged;—and very tenderly she thinks of all those poor children under her care, and more tenderly still of Daisy, to whom Saul of right belongs.

When Mr Lillingston returned home from coursing that day, he found his wife in a more hopeless condition than ever.

Most of his friends, like himself, had the smallest possible conception of what nerves were; and he certainly was not in the approved sympathetic humour. Mrs Lillingston called him a brute. He puffed out his good-natured chest, smiled a good-natured smile, and bore it. One could not be the better for some five or six hours’ bracing exercise to bear ill-humour or show peevishness. When Mrs Lillingston saw that it was utterly impossible to make any impression upon him, and realized that he was in one of his insensible, pleasantly apathetic moods, she turned to the governess again, who, quietly at work on the children’s clothes, looked inoffensive enough.

“Miss Sylvester,” shrilly screamed Mrs Lillingston.

The startled girl laid down her work, while the disturbed husband looked up from the sporting paper he was reading.

“How dare you be sitting there enjoying yourself when I am sitting here suffering? Come over and rub my back, directly.”

Ada meekly complied. Mr St Luke Lillingston put his feet upon the mantelpiece, and went on with his sport. The monotonous sound of friction came across the room—it was broken by his wife's renewed lamentation. "I don't believe there's such a cruel and inconsiderate husband in creation as I'm afflicted with. Not so hard, Miss Sylvester, please; I declare your knuckles are just like iron. Hush—sh, there's the maid crawling about overhead. What can that be for? The rooms were done long ago. Do just run and see. I believe she's at the wardrobe!"

Miss Sylvester softly left the room as bidden.

"What's the matter this morning, my dear?" asked St Luke, with a merry twinkle of the eye.

"Yes; it's well you ask that. Your inhuman blindness is more stolid than ever. When I'm troubled with the whole catalogue of evils in Dante, Milton, and Bradshaw's Peerage!"

St Luke was deep in a prize-fight, and fancied he had heard indistinctly. "Doubling his fist, he struck the Sawny a settler on the nose!"—reading aloud. This exasperated the lady beyond all bearing; and Miss Sylvester returning at that moment, she addressed her with such vehemence Mr Lillingston felt called upon to interfere. "Gently, my dear! Miss Sylvester has done nothing to deserve this."

"Ah, that's right—defend your minion. Oh, woe is me, for the most persecuted wife of a most wicked and perverse generation!" Standing like a demented prophetess, she invoked judgment on their heads.

St Luke was really hurt by the sight of Ada's distress, which she could no longer restrain.

"This is past all reason," he said, reprovingly. "Miss Sylvester has endured a martyr's life since being here, and is not to be spoken of in that way."

"Of course you'll defend her, and trample on my quivering, lacerated, remaining life; but retribution will fall upon this house."

A servant entered to say that a person wished to see Miss Sylvester.

"Person!" exclaimed Mrs Lillingston. "What sort of person?"

"He looks like a workman, ma'am."

The colour fled from Ada's face, and she hurriedly dried her tears. Her attention was again drawn to Mrs Lillingston. "I knew it," cried that lady, with a wail of triumph. "It is a coffin-maker. Let him come near if he dare!"

The man thus described appeared, and Mrs Lillingston started excitedly. He was accompanied by a little girl who at once went to Ada and embraced her. The man with much courtesy explained: "I beg your pardon, I thought Miss Sylvester was alone."

"And if she was, it wouldn't be your place to be with her!" exclaimed Mrs Lillingston, tartly.

Saul Weir turned at the rude remark. "Certainly not," he said.

"And what child is that?" asked Mrs Lillingston, with a suspicious manner.

"Miss Sylvester's sister, madam."

"And a very pretty sister too," said St Luke, candidly. "Come and shake hands, my dear."

Daisy crossed to the gentleman and made friends. His negligent, kind manner prepossessed immediately.

"*St Luke Lillingston!*" cried his wife, in a sepulchral voice, "can you really behave so in my very presence?"

"Don't be foolish, my dear."

By this time Saul Weir quite understood matters. Ada's tell-tale eyes and subdued expression explained all that the lady's virulent tongue left to account for. He felt glad they had come; the visit might do good. Daisy had been longing to see her sister; and as Ada could not go to London, kind-hearted Saul brought the child to her.

It would be pleasant for the sisters to have an hour or two together, he therefore addressed the master of Brunswick House.

"Have you any objection to Miss Sylvester spending an hour or two with her sister?"

"Not any."

"I forbid that arrangement," cried Mrs Lillingston, excitedly.

Mr Weir stepped forward. "You've been making yourself singularly disagreeable, madam. What is it all about?"

At this cool question and the indescribably cool manner, Mrs Lillingston convulsively caught at the nearest article of furniture.

"Who are you that dare speak like this to me?"

"I—am a carpenter."

"And undertaker," she gasped, falling back upon the couch.

"Well, no, not exactly," he said, smiling. The woman's antics puzzled him, but he was disposed to give her credit for real suffering; and he thought the only way to meet her malady was by firm but pleasant self-possession. "And now will you be good enough to tell us why you object to Miss Sylvester being with her sister for a time?"

"Because Miss Sylvester is too busy. And I desire first to know where that child springs from all at once."

"Yes. She springs from London."

"I don't know much of London, except that it is the hot-bed of scarlatina. Now we are very full of children here—I don't quite know how many, but a large number—and I maintain it will imperil all those dear children for Ada Sylvester to be with her sister."

"Make your mind easy, Miss Daisy lives with me."

"Lives with you!" cried the lady, horrified. Without noticing the interruption, he continued:

"And there is nothing of the kind in my house, or anywhere near it, that I am aware of. But since you dislike Miss Sylvester spending an hour or two with her sister, it will be as well for me to submit that she leaves your service and accepts a home with us, where she will be treated respectfully and with feeling." Mr Weir turned to Ada and said, "You know how pleased we shall be if you will change your home. From what I have seen in this short time, I judge you to be miserable here."

Ada looked at the man who thus spoke so protectingly.

He was as ever, hero and friend to her. And she trembled before the ineffable pleasure his offer gave promise of, and the tremendous sorrow it might lead up to. No; she did not dare to think of it. Yet how great was the struggle! To refuse him anything, to decline that kind home, to lose the chance of being always near Daisy. She was very pale, but answered firmly, "No, thank you, Mr Weir. I will not leave Mrs Lillingston."

Even St Luke looked up in astonishment. His wife was also affected. She started up, and, crossing the room with a crab-like, sidelong movement peculiar to her, caught the hand of the governess, and said, in a voice of much emotion, "I always thought you ungrateful for my kindness, but I see that your heart is touched by all I have gone through. I never believed you would leave me, when your master used to say so."

"No," said the girl, dreamily, "I will not leave you."

"I shall double Miss Sylvester's salary for her decision," remarked St Luke, quietly.

"That you must do as you like about," said his wife, sourly. "If you can squander money in that way, with your family, all I can say is, some of them will come to want." Then she appeared to be thinking profoundly, the result of it being this: "It's not money Miss Sylvester wants so much as active employment, to keep her mind engaged and time occupied. It is not every young person who has the privilege of living in a 'Brunswick' House, and I'm glad Miss Sylvester knows when she is well off."

Saul Weir listened to Ada's refusal, and witnessed her meek submission with some speculation. It wanted working out. There was more behind. He held a theory there was a great deal behind most things; but he could not make the theory fit to his liking in this case. It was a dead enigma, and for Daisy's sake he felt sorry.

"And now," said Mr Lillingston, kindly, "I am sure your time is precious, therefore give chase, and don't come in till you're tired."

They waited no second permission. Ada and Daisy ran—

up-stairs, where the former dressed quickly, and they returned to Saul, who was walking up and down outside. "Now," said he, "take Daisy the prettiest walk Ipswich can boast of, Miss Ada. I am going to rout over the old books!" He judged the sisters would like to be alone in the little time at their disposal. Daisy rewarded him with one of her grateful smiles, and they walked on.

There was so much to talk of upon one side. Ada would not distress Daisy by any account of her own experience.

First of the kind and loving care of Saul, and the progress made in scholarship and housekeeping. "I love him more and more!" cried the child, with a burst of fervid gratitude. Ada heard this confession with emotion. A deep, settled light made her face beautiful, could Daisy have seen, but it was averted.

"Does Mr Weir love you as much as ever, dear?" asked Ada, quietly.

She was always so quiet and gentle that Daisy took no particular notice of it, but answered warmly, "Oh yes. He seldom passes an evening away from me."

Ada thought of her own cheerless evenings, and the cold, dreary winter, that seemed so long, because there was no heart nor fireside for her.

"He so often says how happy we might be if you came to live with us; but I think he feels you would not like it—because he is only a poor carpenter."

How we are supported sometimes! Ada never knew how she went through this ordeal, when it would have been relief to sink insensible upon the ground. Would not like it? Why, he was all that is good and excellent, and very near to her ideal of true manhood.

Daisy, full of her girlish confidence, little dreamed the pain she was inflicting. "Sometimes we fancy you upon one side the fire and Saul the other, and me on a footstool between. That's where I often do sit, with a book and my kitten."

With fond, sad smiling, Ada answered, tenderly, "A pretty home-picture. How I should like to peep in upon you! Yes, dear, it would be very pleasant." Then, as by an impulse she

could not restrain, "If you have an opportunity, place the reason of my not coming in a better light. There is nowhere I should so like to go, but I feel it a duty to stay where I am."

This was said too calmly to betray the secret. There was a pause, during which Ada struggled with a haunting thought she had not the opportunity of alluding to before, and now she could barely frame her question dispassionately enough.

"Sometimes in your letters you have mentioned Adrienne Bernardin, and praised her attractiveness—do you like her as well as ever?"

"Oh yes, she is so kind! I try to put her in your place, darling. Of course I can't do that; but it is some one to talk to now and then."

"Yes; you want some one," said Ada, tenderly; although she felt to be choking; "and—does—she—take—my—place—at the fireside, too?" With soft, painful eagerness to know.

Daisy answered directly, "Oh no, she is too busy after closing. She has been in a few times but not to stay many minutes, and then only to talk with me. Saul is always at his books or the organ."

"And now let us have a good run, darling!" cried Ada. "As we used to do, when we were so happy, before I lost my little sister."

Ada set off at a run that was like old times, so that Daisy could hardly keep up with her. It was to hide the feelings that had caused hot tears to start in spite of all. They were dashed right and left unnoticed; cheeks were all a-glow. Daisy thought how merry and high-spirited she was, and felt glad to see it.

Then they walked on quietly again, and Daisy chatted about events, running back over topics of old letters, and telling sister Ada all about their dead friend Archie, Rupert, and the beautiful boy, who was now an inmate of their house; and she described all with such warmth Ada experienced a curious sense of peril assailing the man she loved. With the sweet unselfishness which was the primary charm of her nature she placed the one idealism of her life far back, and

thought only of him, with great apprehension lest any wound fell on that love of his for Daisy. She heard her out, and then in the tone of gentle reproof she had sometimes used in past times, chided her lovingly.

"As Mr Weir is so good to you, dear, and since you love him so much, is it well to think thus highly of others? He should have all your thought, and every attention now astray from him."

Daisy looked up in great surprise at her sister's earnestness, and then noticed how pale Ada was, how the lips were compressed with sharp pain.

They were taking a quiet walk, away from the town, where people seldom went on week-days. Ada pursued her sisterly remonstrance.

"It may be a long time before I have the chance to speak to you again dear, so let me talk a little seriously. You are with one who is very kind. I had no friend, but fought my way alone, often longing with intensity for some such protector as you now have. Value his love highly," she added, with deep emotion, "for if forfeited through any carelessness it is not likely to be recovered."

"Why do you talk like this to me, Ada?" asked Daisy in distress.

"Because, darling, he has been so good to you, and I am anxious for both his happiness and yours. I can judge his nature. Lessening of your affection would grieve him too deeply ever to be forgotten. I wish to have so sorrowful an ending to your friendship rendered impossible. The young are thoughtless sometimes, but you are not like that; we were schooled in feeling early. I am sure you understand me."

"Yes," said Daisy, with a quivering lip, for she had complied with Archie's dying wish that she would give her friendship to his friend. She remembered how grateful Rupert seemed, and how it shed wonderful happiness upon his lonely life: she would no more think of wounding one than the other, her heart was all too affectionate. Perhaps Ada could show the escape as she saw the danger.

"I may not prove unkind to Mr Redland, even if I lose Saul's love."

Ada looked surprised at her resolute remark. But Ada did not see the haunting face of Archie, imprinted for ever upon her sister's heart; nor hear the sad dying voice leaving that earnest legacy.

Ada pointed above. "Do you see that white cloud?"

"Yes."

"And the blue sky against which it rests?"

"Yes, dear."

"Can you keep friendship for one, and love for the other, as distinct?"

Daisy put her hand in Ada's with confidently sincere reliance. "Yes; Archie wished that." The action and tone of voice were so exquisite Ada kissed her for it.

They walked on for some time in silence. Then Ada with a blithesome change asked lightly,—“Now tell me how you spend the day, what you do, where you go, and all about it?”

Daisy told her all there was to tell; a simple history of making the most and the best of every day that passed.

They returned to the town, and came upon Saul Weir poring over works upon electro-biology, magnetism, and the like; he had been actively searching for a volume of the kind while making acquaintance with the old book-stalls of Ipswich. So intent was he upon glancing through the book in pursuit of information he wanted, that they passed him without being seen, and it was only Daisy's voice recalled him from deep musing. Saul was full of a project that seemed to be approaching some success. And it was characteristic that while so many were intent upon a search after gold for themselves, this man to whom it belonged was content to dive deep in pursuit of relief for another. Saul Weir had determined, God willing, he would cure the daughter of their good friend Cobham Masheter.

He purchased the work, and they walked on in the direction of Ada's home.

"Mrs Lillingston seems in a delicate state of health, Miss Sylvester?"



"Yes," replied Ada in a low voice, while looking in the shop-windows.

"If I ever came to live about this part I should invite you both on a visit, when I would try to cheer it out of her."

Ada seemed walking like one in a dream. She could think his remarks over afterwards, just then it was impossible.

"Daisy laughs when I tell her I shall relinquish my trade in favour of healing, which is more wanted."

"You think there are many in need of it?" asked the governess, faintly.

"I think there are many wounded about, Miss Sylvester."

Ada turned her head quickly; their eyes met. The enigma was solved: and Saul Weir said no more; but when he took her hand at parting, what a tender grasp it was, how eloquent with the rare sympathy which comforts! Its message was one of higher happiness, strong to rest upon, sweet to commune with, soft as downy pillow to the aching head; the dearest guest, the fairest visitor ever admitted to the human heart; the distant golden day with its bells and music; the jewel of our strange, uneven, restless life. His look, the contact with his hand, inspired this higher thought, with its language of quick welcome; its tender raising of the bowed head and tear-stained face; its courteous supporting of the drooping frame until noble again with restored dignity; tearful eyes lifted to eyes all feeling; bowed face to a face all sympathy.

Ada thought of it and him afterwards in her tiny bedroom, whither she escaped for one short interval to ponder, before resuming the old weary routine. Sitting on the only chair at the small deal dressing-table, the well-worked hand supporting the fragile head, she thought of what unexpected incidents may crowd upon an hour. Thinking of him that morning as ever, she had still little supposed the day would bring him to her, but it had, and discovered her secret; how she trembled with sorry mortification because of it. Then remembered that parting clasp of the hand with timidly pleasant dwelling upon its sympathy. Some people measure out their mercy as the druggists do their drachms, sparingly and with caution; he gave his hand with its sympathy, gra-

ciously, in a whole, fine grasp, which conferred new life that was higher far than his love, or any man's.

There are friends who, through harshness, intend kindly; he meant kindness and conveyed it unmistakably: in the closed privacy of sacred solitude she would think of it gratefully.

When the toil of the day was done, and the worry over for a little, she had been glad to forget it if she could, and turn to a book of poems given her by Daisy. And they rose fragrant as spring-tide meadows, healthful as odours of the sea. She did not care for those having toil and trouble for their burden, with carking cares made metrical, duplicating by polished phrases the weary days' experiences; over such she would close the poet's page, gaining therefrom no refreshing sustenance, going thereto with no pleasant expectation. But there were others that were just as helpful; for he had written with most urgent meaning, and a high, stern aim and purpose, disdaining the shallow trickeries of rhymesters; and if in places fettered in low valleys, he seemed ever striving, mounting to the release of song from suffering. He had wrought song from pain upon an inspired harp, and the poems bore a still finer meaning after all Daisy had been telling her. She handled the book with a sort of reverence, wondering, if she let it open where it would, if any new light might be thrown upon the romance of their poor lives; the cover fell back and the pages parted at the dedication: *Inscribed to Etta Lute.*

And she mused on it for so long, she marvelled if this pretty name of some stranger did indeed seal her course through life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BEAVERS AT WORK.

NOT a hundred miles from Hackney Church—famous for weddings and its labyrinth of tombstones—in a genteel district where men and houses were more upright than anywhere else round the suburbs, on a door grained and varnished dazzlingly, was an over-bright brass-plate, which, when the sun shone thereon, made the passing horses blink and shy, while the inscription puzzled the particular people around and caused the uprightness of Hackney to ponder, for it bore this curious announcement :

BEAVER AND SON.

Curious, because this was a private neighbourhood—a neighbourhood of independency and glaring respectability. There were not even any professional people in that part, and yet here was a brass-plate bearing a decidedly mercantile if not commercial announcement. And the upright people disliked it extremely, especially those living next door, who kept up a disgusted scrutiny from the corners of their windows to try and discover what it meant. They did not succeed ; although they professed to have seen a person of common order, short, and fat, and vulgarly red in the face—all the people in that locality were tall and thin and of a severely genteel design—and they did not like the look of him at all. Also they had seen a slim, unhealthy-looking being, awkward in his gait and boorish in his manner, whom they presumed to be the son.

The housemaids learned everything whilst doing adjoining steps, and found out all there was to find concerning the very plebeian residents arousing this commotion. It was gathered that the old man made hats, or used to ; that he was jolly and sociable, and quite opposed to the upright spirit, being more of a downright tendency. He kept a lot of company—of an odd sort certainly, but still company ; was very good to the servants, whom he fed on the best and paid liberally ; and was altogether a kind and hearty sort of person.

All this crept from the kitchens to the parlours, and the sternly respectable folk next door did not like that mention of company at all ;—it seemed to hint at noise, racket, late hours, introduction of a disorderly element, and no end of disturbance.

The impression was not improved when the cheery Beaver bounced up the steps of the house on his right, and pulled a lusty peal on the tradesmen's bell, instead of giving a fashionable and decent rat-a-tat-tat-tat ! He had with him the unwholesome-visaged son, and the shocked mistress of the house nervously put her head out of the dining-room door, and bade the servant say that she was not at home. Each of these hatters had come without his hat : and Beaver senior was too good a judge to stand in a cold draught, so he stepped lightly in, tugging at the pliable junior, and then closed the door, much to the domestic's embarrassment. Not to prolong it, Beaver skipped up - stairs, calling down, "I'll wait till Mrs What's-her-name comes in ! Now, Phineas boy, open the drawing-room door for your father, sir !"

The scared maid went to the annoyed mistress, who, rising hastily from an easy-chair, an anti-macassar sticking to her back, marched up to the irrepressible intruders with a cast of freezing severity. The lady was unaware of the addition to her costume, but Mr Beaver noticed it and skipped round to her back with brisk gallantry ; this alarmed the highly decorous matron to the greatest extent, for she thought the man wanted to waltz with her. She fled at his approach, and, seizing the bell-handle, demanded his business.

"I could tell by the shape of your head, ma'am, you were

hasty, but I've fitted many a riding-hat on worse skulls than yours when I was in trade. Tell you what I've come for. I thought we ought to be a little friendly living next door, both with you and the old duchess on the other side. This is my boy Phineas; come for'ards, sirrah, and shake hands with Mrs—I haven't the pleasure of knowing your name, ma'am, nor the style your husband does business under, but that's of no consequence!"

This extraordinary address was so incredible and unexpected that the lady could do nothing but gasp and stand looking fixedly at the remarkable beings before her. Mr Beaver never allowed any indifference nor reserve to put him out, and he walked coolly round the room with a critical air. "Half these old things might be done away with, and supply 'em by spick and span trifles, which you can buy for a song! I got mine, a bargain, at a defunct pawnbroker's, and you're welcome to run in and look 'em over any time you like."

To the lady, who prided herself upon her drawing-room, with its objects of taste and antique rarity, this coarse vulgarity was horrible.

Mr Beaver was removing the glass-shade from a Parian nymph. "I don't care for this sort of thing, you know. Articles of virtue were never in my line! Something trumpery about 'em! Might as well have put an undressed beaver in my shop-window!"

Decorum could not stand more of this behaviour: the lady rang the bell violently.

"Thank you," said the smiling Beaver, "*we have* lunched."

The prim domestic, in a freshly starched cap, entered hurriedly.

"Has your master returned?" asked the lady.

"Don't you trouble," exclaimed Mr Beaver, tumbling back with an air of enjoyment on the lady's most luxurious couch. "It's the women we're looking up. Now, Phineas, come over and try this, sir." Saying which, the Beaver sprang up, and tested the springs again.

"Whatever shall I do?" cried the lady to her servant.

"We don't want you to do anything, except keep quiet; we're all right. Come here, Phineas."

The bilious one went to his father. "Sit down," said he, comfortably; and Phineas did so, after a cramped fashion, as though in the old tight hunting-gear. "Now give me your candid opinion, Phineas. Do you think this as good as the second-hand *cretonne* thing I bought at the sale? Now, no beating about—is it, or isn't it?" Hands on knees, Beaver revolved to face the wretched Phineas.

The lady of the house indignantly bade the servant go and fetch Mr Spiveytop, a worthy residing on the other side of this ill-bred interloper, and united in bonds of correct friendship with the besieged family. Presently a sharp, very erect gentleman appeared, with a tuft of very erect white hair sticking up at the apex of his angularly arched forehead; which Beaver no sooner caught sight of, than he started, clutched Phineas, and extending his left hand to the severe-looking gentleman, thus greeted him: "Glad to know you, Mr Spiveytop, if only to say I never in all my life saw such a cranium before!" Mr Beaver stood and stared at it with undisguised wonder. "You're the first I ever saw I thought I couldn't fit, and I'll be hanged if I couldn't make a better shape than that!" He burst into a peal of laughter in which nobody joined, but which he enjoyed none the less on that account.

Mr Spiveytop's silence was, however, cuttingly severe.

"Now I look at you," said Beaver, curiously, "it strikes me you may be the party who buys up all the old teeth; although what you do with 'em puzzles the public. Use 'em for your garden-path, maybe, in place o' pebbles: it's an awfully formal and white affair."

The gentleman's look of disgust was so pronounced, Beaver remarked, "That egg you had for breakfast was done hard, I know. Your servant gals look as if they didn't know what they were doing, always. What you want to keep such a lot for, I can't conceive."

"My husband is away," explained the lady to her friend, hastily; "I thought it better to send in for you."



"That egg you had for breakfast was done hard, I know." PAGE 308.



"If that's the way you go on in this part, I wish I hadn't come to it;" said Beaver, with a wicked glint of the eye.

The shocked Mr Spiveytop, with the tuft painfully prominent, replied excitedly to this dreadful person, who was so disturbing the uprightness of the quarter: "Perhaps you will explain the meaning of this conduct, sir?"

"To be sure!" cried Mr Beaver, in hilarious enjoyment of the explanation he held in reserve. "You must know (or might have known, if you'd lived in the Strand twenty-one years ago), my boy Phineas comes of age to-morrow, and as we're going to have a few friends to supper—nothing formal—I thought I couldn't do less than ask our neighbour, Mrs What's-her-name here, and your old dry stick of a self! Now don't begin saying you can't come, either of you; it ain't far, and you can get over the wall at the back, if that's all."

Mr Spiveytop's tuft was perfectly erect with wrath; turning to his friend, shaking with indignation, he besought her to calm herself while he spoke to the man. "You seem to have lost sight of the circumstance that this is a respectable neighbourhood, my good fellow. Residents hereabout do not conduct themselves with the laxity you describe. It is evident you are out of your place amongst us; and, allow me to say, it would have been a relief to us all if you had not taken the trouble to come."

"I just now told you I wish I hadn't," said Beaver, with provoking coolness and a beaming smile, while he rose and beckoned his interesting boy. "Come along, Phineas; here's old Spiveytop wants to be alone with Mrs What's-her-name! I can allus tell when I ain't wanted."

He went out at a trot, and with a broad laugh, pulled to the front door behind them.

Of course this extraordinary occurrence heightened the disfavour generally felt, and much the morrow was dreaded.

It confirmed the designation "odd," applied to the Beavers' company. And it was said that a more disreputable tribe never marched up to the door of a private residence than when those guests appeared.

Jolly old souls, arm and arm, round, red, and riotous-look-

ing, with poke bonnets, extraordinary gear and gaiters ; where could such an old-fashioned gathering have trooped from ? And slimmer, thinner ones, more of that boy Phineas's stamp, awkwardly angular, with sharp elbows that seemed to stick in one another's ribs, and lank, lean hands, with white cotton gloves, half a finger too long.

Feverish was the watch set on these eccentric folk, and grim were the hidden faces angrily regarding them.

This did not affect those invited to the party, who alone or in pairs looked bent on enjoying it.

Beaver senior kept his front door open and stood on the mat to greet them. And his welcome took an unusually hearty shape, so that people living opposite, who could see the new tenant's geniality to advantage, felt more disgusted than ever ; but did not withdraw their spying, the people were so provocative to ridicule.

Such a country-going lot had never been seen in that part of London before ; their ruddy, stupid faces, rural style, attire of the past, cloddish gait, and provincial demeanour, amused, if it shocked ; and even the staid ones who never looked out of windows, deeming it vanity, arose for once and stared with the rest.

A notable feature of the ceremony of receiving his guests was an original and happy if not aristocratic one—Beaver had hung a hearth-rug lengthways out of the drawing-room window and it bore a great—

HOW D'YE DO ?

schemed of twisted pink paper. This was taken in after the guests had arrived, but no blinds were lowered or curtains drawn, so that there was ample opportunity of observing the festivity within.

And that it was of a boisterous type ; the amount of mirth and jollity there going on caused the staid ones to turn their eyes up with bitterness and vexation of spirit.

There was something guileless if rustic about the people, and they carried innocence upon the face of them, so that the

watchers who were not absolutely guileless looked with pity as well as curiosity.

Eating—drinking—smoking—songs—funny stories—and a jig, in which the red-faced Beaver could be seen spinning round the red-faced others, until the watchers turned giddy and were stricken with amazement: never had they seen such antics before. There seemed also to be games, notably blind-man's-buff, when the irrepressible one was plainly discerned moving about with eyes bandaged and hands outstretched, searching for something. Altogether, from the glee with which Beaver and his friends went at it, there was no doubt whatever of the success of their efforts to keep the game alive.

The great feature was the supper, the glory of which could not be seen from the distance; nor could the remarkable speeches on the occasion be heard: but there it was, and that also appeared marked by vociferous cordiality.

To gain more space it was held in the drawing-room, and the hospitable board "groaned" beneath a prodigal luxuriousness of fare, consisting of potatoes and pigs' feet, boiled beef and carrots, suet-pudding and treacle, hard dumplings and dripping, cockles, and other nutritious if not noble fish—and unlimited beverage, of a rich, black colour. Apparently the fare suited the palate of the rustic and provincial visitors—they put much away.

Mr Beaver was in the chair, his vice being a stout old woman whom he called Aunty. His vulgarity, and that of his friends, men and women, might have astonished those of the upright persuasion.

Curious people were there, from the man who once in a fit of absence of mind cherished a telegraph-post and made for himself a habitation for the night upon its wires, to the cadaverous man with protruding eyes who seemed apprehensive of where he placed his footsteps, walking with the cat-on-hot-ashes delicacy of tread.

There was another man who closed his left eye while arching the left brow to discern more piercingly with the other, a twist which distorted the whole face into an enlarged india-rubber style of physiognomy; and another man who had a

habit of smoothing or soothing his whiskers and the corners of his mouth in a manner peculiarly irritating to other people.

And there was a mirthfully-melancholy person, who would have sat on one end of the stone from which the mason was cutting his tomb, and discoursed to him upon the pleasant virtue of cheerful resignation.

Another who all his life had only patronised monosyllables, entertaining nervous dread of all others, which he considered were invented for lawyers and people of subterfuge.

One old lady had come in a scarlet shawl, which she was never known to be without. Really a pious person, she attended a small chapel, the pastor of which was so aggravated by that shawl every Sabbath-day, he was incessantly assailing Rome, with special reference to a strongly coloured historical illustration.

There was also a scraggy young man, buttoned up tightly, with a whitey-brown face of the hatchet design, and an eye like that work of fierce art imaginative stuffers delight to place in birds of prey; and a young woman with him who might have sat for the picture of village innocence: sylvan simplicity was upon her poppy-coloured lips when she simpered, pastoral pertness peeped from the dimples of her poppy-coloured cheeks. She came in a straw-hat of the old English design that used to bob around the Maypole, and May was stuck in it, with maize ribbons.

Another fair one, of more advanced years, was chiefly celebrated for knitting tableaux, tatting courtship, slippered natural history, and crochet gossip. A stout old lady, who came with a basket and a camp-stool, and marched up briskly as though meaning business, planting her stool in the passage, and setting her basket down sharply, looked altogether so like a village shopkeeper out for the day that she especially exercised the sarcasm of the people opposite. There was also a couple chiefly distinguished for an asthmatic and autumnal umbrella, which was fearfully and wonderfully wrought.

Two were there familiarly alluded to as the Joneses. Mr Jones had been all his life beating somebody down, and was growing grey from people taking the advantage of him. Mrs



Jones was a large lady, impressive by exterior but internally weak; she never troubled or worried about anything, leaving all to Jones and Providence: she only prayed when it thundered, and then was spasmodically devout. The Joneses were looked upon with great respect, for, like the Beavers, they had money.

These were some of the prominent ones: then came the rank and file of the unsophisticated—a jovial, happy-go-lucky, exuberant group, evidently well acquainted with the constitution of turnips, and who might have been passed down from the enlightened era of the stocks.

Mr Beaver rose to address this noble throng in response to their drinking the health of his son. He was plainly seen from opposite, standing puffy and large with the effort of delivering a speech. He said:

"In the name of my boy Phineas, glad to see you all, and many thanks for your good wishes. I go back with emotion to the hour when a heir was born to the Beavers." (He wiped an imaginary tear away with a corner of the table-cloth.) "St Clement Danes rang a peal, *why*, I don't know—but it did; and an order came in, 'two dozen billy-cocks for a school!' My hangel of a wife said, 'Our boy Phineas will be great and wealthy! Don't bring him up on farinaceous food, and think of me.' I was a good husband, I can't say I've been a good widower. I've gone a little gay; but, dear souls, what's the good o' tackling life earnestly, if one doesn't enjoy it afterwards? We thank you all for coming—there's a word or so on other matters, but let us now confine attention to the entertainment afore you—fill glasses all, and drink a bumper to Aunty there!"

The lady thus indicated had already been bumpering it too much, and nodded her head drowsily. Mr Beaver continued:

"You all know I made my money at trade, and that I've a tidy lot; but I shall want all that for my own enjoyment, then what's my boy Phineas to do? Well, friends, we're coming to that in the more serious part of our talking, at present we'll confine ourselves to diversion—and here's to the health of Jones yonder and his good lady."

The peculiar-looking person known as Jones was seen from over the way to dart up as though about to make some reply.

"Wait a moment, Jones," said Beaver; and Jones sat down, while his host continued: "Now, friends, it's a matter o' mine, it isn't because a man's made a lot he isn't to make more, 'specially when he wants all he's made for hisself. Mine, of course, was got together by bowin' and scrapin', which is out o' Phineas's way altogether. There have been cases, you know, in which parties have come down plump on hoards which have lasted 'em for the rest o' their days; of course, this is neither here nor there, so we'll patronise the feast before us now, and drink to Mother Mulgrudery!"

Those opposite saw the old woman, who came with the basket, rise as if to return thanks.

"Bide ye, Mother," cried Beaver; and she sat down again, while he pursued the thread of his argument. And it looked as if there was something more in this gathering than neighbours could see, although the blinds were up.

"All of you have heard me say a few words upon other occasions when we've had the pleasure o' supping together, upon the extraordinary things that *have* from time to time been dug out o' the earth—and we're not alluding to body-snatching, although Jabez Crossbones, President o' th' Sexton's Free-and-Easy, is present, in honour o' which I beg to propose President Crossbones's health and spirits."

At that the mirthfully-melancholy man rose with lugubrious mournfulness to return jocund thanks. He was seen to do so from outside.

"Sit down, Crossbones," ordered the host; the disma- individual did so, with the twinkle of a vampire, and Beaver went on: "Knowing valuable savings are put into banks two kinds, it would never surprise us, would it, if we accidentally turned over something in the money way when out herb-gathering along hedges and ditches, or walking over the land where the men are at plough? And aware that our friend Mary, the Maid o' the Inn, as I may truthfully call her, takes many a country stroll, gathering posies, I call upon

you kindly to drink to Mary—as pretty a village belle as you'll find out Hoxton way.”

This caused laughter; and those opposite thought the speaker had said something funny. Beaver went on more gravely:

“I believe we're all better acquainted with the East end of London than the East part o' England; but not to go into that, I now call upon you to report”

The puffy red-faced one was seen to sit down, and another puffy red-faced man was seen to get up. This was all open to the world—no deception when the Beavers were at work! Had the shrewdest heads of Scotland Yard been opposite, the only feeling would have been a desire to join the festive souls carousing. One of the guests, it was noted, now rose, probably to return thanks, or to make a speech. He did so in these terms:

“On receiving your letter and cheque, I bought the disguise and went on direct to Suffolk, where I crossed paths with some of the others. We took different routes, according to the directions given. I perambulated the fields you wished, walking with the ploughers and alone. Found no sign of any stone or peculiarity likely to indicate the site. I did come upon an odd sort of pond down in one of the fields, dug a hundred years ago for cattle, hidden and belted in by ragged undergrowth and trees; but though I beat the bush to an inch, I could find nothing of value for an indication, so I came on at once, as you said we were to meet here to narrate progress and receive directions.”

This cheery-looking person was seen to take his seat. The old woman of the basket was next observed to be talking very fast, her white cap ducking and bobbing rapidly with the effort. This heroine was saying:

“I got your cheque and orders, went at once, and tramped it herb-gathering. Found suspicious-looking yellow-red clay in a ditch and began to dig; it only proceeded from old embedded ploughshares. Left that and tried further. Discovered an extraordinary lane—nobody would suspect it; half-way down is a grindstone, partly covered by nettles; must have

been there a tremendous time ; no motive assignable for the fact of its being there."

Beaver was looking down ; he might have been saying grace from the outside view : he did not raise his head, but in a low business-like tone asked—

"Is it grown over with green ? In which position does it lie ?"

Could this be the same man, with the face drawn and fixed, teeth meeting grippingly, like a trap that closes on something ; writing with a swift hand upon a small card he held below the level of the table ?

"Yes ; quite covered," answered the woman. "Weeds thick-stemmed, grass long and broad of blade ; it can never have been disturbed. As for the position, it was that which most aroused my speculation, lying as it does in the bottom of the ditch, with that side nearest the field raised by a brick. There are singular marks on it—might be a sign of the zodiac."

"Bother the zodiac !—sign of the public is more in our way. Did you have it up ?"

"Couldn't lift it, so thought better not to disturb it."

"Fill up the glasses ! Speech, with action, from somebody—sharp."

A man rose, and with expression made dumb-show of a speech, indicating Phineas junior every now and then, and sitting down with a flourish of his arms.

"Next report ?" asked Beaver.

The tight-buttoned young man got up as though cracking in the process ; spectators over the way attributed it to affectation. Really, he was the shrunken victim of ghastliness, and most miserable-looking being in the pay and service of the moneyed chief of this fraternity. He dolorously said :

"Quarter of a mile from the sign-post, bearing right, one rood from the line of larches, is a gate." At this important piece of intelligence the being turned his eyes up as though he had said a ghost. "Pass through, bearing left ; thirteen feet from a privet-hedge stands a cart-shed, in use only for an old tumbril—I ask your attention, the appearance is peculiar ; partly unthatched, the roof is laden with moss,

upon which I saw one black pigeon!" Again did the narrator turn up his eyes with a weirdly unpleasant cast.

"What the devil did that matter?" asked Mr Beaver, hotly.

The young man, without heeding his irritation, went on with his strange account.

"Standing within, I could see that bird through the ruined thatch, also chalk-marks upon the wood forming the side of the shed. I ask your particular attention here: they are almost obliterated by time; none but a close observer would trace them; but they take the unmistakable form of a hand, outstretched, the thumb prominent: there is some other feature, but too indistinct to follow. Putting that black bird and those white marks in connection, I make something significant of it, although *what*, is too indistinct to trace."

"Sit down," growled Beaver, savagely. "What are ye doing wasting time in that way?"

The young man appeared cracking still more, while he sat down with a very crushed air.

An energetic, bulky-looking person, of florid colour and great shaggy brows, rose with a massive manner, meaning his size and weight should impress if his communication did not. He began with gravity, rumbling under the burden of what he had to say, his heavy chin working with the routine as though he masticated something tough. Said he:

"Hired a little cob—rode well across country for miles; then the beggar bolted—never stopped till Peterborough; pitched me over her neck into th' Commercial Inn; there I've been ever since. Collar-bone, spine—I don't know what the devil there is not—broken!"

He sat down pretty firmly for a man thus injured.

There was no doubt about Messrs Beaver and Son having a singular staff in their employ. They were not sparing with their gold in this great venture, and had, moreover, agreed to share a third of the hoard, if found, amongst those now aiding the search. Phineas Beaver, with all his assumption of nonsense and really genuine flow of animal spirits, was practically of a business-like turn, and it was evident to him that

while they were grubbing about on an insignificant exploration, the Treasure would be seized by somebody else. They must counterbalance the throng against them. Beaver did this in a characteristic manner, fully worthy of the Strand—engaged just double to go to work in his own interests; a bold *coup*, but he knew they had only until the return of the heir from America to discover it. That young man would, it was all but certain, bring back with him the accurate direction to the hiding-place, when all contrivance must cease. The Beaver colony was naturally industrious, and operation of such magnitude did not offer every day. They had therefore put the Herongate estate and wide circuit around under minute examination. To forestall that return from America became the great question, and the facetious director providing the funds grinned contentedly over it; *they* would find it, if it was to be found. There was nothing like going by scent.

The pious person in the scarlet shawl spoke next: her voice was low and its tone a whine. The man of business called out, "Speak up, please!"

"I called on Baptists, Independents, and Wesleyans, all round, and gossiped with them about the last Squire of the parish. They know a deal, especially concerning the son of one Dame Edred, long chief servant, or as some said, house-keeper. A high-spirited lad, well beliked on the country-side; and it was supposed they were over fond of him at the mansion, for they were never the same after he went to America. An old man, a Bible Christian, told me he remembered upon one night, many and many a year ago, he met the Squire and Dame Edred carrying something between them, and it looked like a chest."

"Speak lower!" ordered Beaver, eagerly straining to catch the rest, without revealing his interest to the street. Phineas junior was reporter now, and wrote as the woman spoke.

"He felt constrained as a conscientious Bible Christian not to say anything; but he went the same walk the next night, and they passed him again carrying a smaller chest. As this was later than midnight it struck him as peculiar, but he was that conscientious he never mentioned it; perhaps,

too, having regard to being a tenant. He never saw it again. They *might* have gone another way to wherever they went."

"Getting near it," muttered Beaver. "Of course you asked the direction they took?"

"They could have gone in any direction after passing him; he don't know which."

"Why didn't the fool follow? His name and address?"

Having given this, the woman settled herself with an air of being in harmony with all men.

"Fill glasses!" ordered Beaver.

There followed another speech in dumb-show.

Then the lady whose European reputation was confined to knitting, tatting, and crochet, piped *her* little lay, with a melodious accompaniment from electro-plated earrings.

"I called upon the better class of residents. Much gratified with my Irish tatting; wanted to have point-lace, which I do not waste time over. Upon my casually alluding to the old lace, said to be deposited in chests at the Heron-gate, they hadn't heard of it. One did believe there was something mysterious about the old place, but didn't quite know what; and had I any instructions to give away gratis on pillow-lace? I persevered, picked up the country, stitch by stitch, and put a fringe round the estate. Thought I'd knotted it once—Doctor's wife—husband attended the old man at the last, and he made a communication of importance; I pressed for it; felt on the right tack at last——"

"Yes?" asked Beaver, eagerly.

"Reluctant to disclose what had been imparted in confidence; but as after a few minutes we loved each other dearly, she explained, 'Well dear, I ought not to tell you, but I know you'll never speak of it, being a purely family matter.' I promised faithfully; she concluded, 'He admitted he'd been troubled with the bile from his cradle!'"

The lady of work ceased with a plaintive pose. Beaver swore. Phineas junior kicked the corn of the man next him, who swore also. The man of the india-rubber physiognomy, whose extraordinary grimaces were discerned by the aid of a glass from opposite, stood up and spoke:

"Mr Beaver—Ladies, and Gentlemen;" (awful twist of the left eye). "We are here to commemorate research, and we meet out of honour to our respected friend's son!" (He took a slant look at Phineas, and it was so diabolical that the young man felt he would rather have been without it). "Aware of the double importance of this meeting—perhaps as important a meeting as was ever held in London outside Hyde Park—I applied myself, as I'm sure all of you did, to further our worthy employer's interests!" (Prolonged cheering. The neighbours thought they were all drunk, and singing, 'We won't go home till morning!') "I have no reason to regret that diligence—I discovered A CAVE!" (Phineas began to write feverishly. Beaver's eyes tried to centre on the man's face, but its contortions were so rapid and hideous he gave up following his features and confined himself to his words.) "It is a peculiar place. There are signs of digging, done, I should think, a quarter of a century ago; remains of ashes and molten lead still visible, suggesting soldering processes. In the sand—mark this, if you please—I discovered a shred of baize of a deep red colour. There can be no doubt that after his victim had helped to remove the treasure-chests to that lonely spot, he foully murdered her and deposited the remains in that cave." (Phenomenal grimace.)

The climax. Beaver and Son rose. "I'll go down there to-morrow with you. Anybody else got a card to trump it?"

There was no reply; and with triumphant jubilation, he exclaimed: "One more bumper to my boy Phineas and the Treasure of Boadicea!"

The neighbours saw the party break up at an earlier hour than expected. The company left in rather more jolly fashion than they had come, although some of them were quite unable to define the line of pavement from the line of roadway.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE INGENUOUS NEIGHBOUR.

SAUL WEIR and Daisy returned to London.

"Any orders, my boy?" asked the former as he entered.

"Yes, sir," replied Arthur, his face brightening up at their return.

"That's well," cried the carpenter heartily; "I'll attend to them in a minute or two."

Saying which he left the shop to place his hat and coat aside.

"How have you been getting on?" asked Daisy. "Did you feel dull? I hope you made a good dinner."

"Not quite so well as I should have done if you had been at home," said Arthur, looking with shy pleasure at his fellow-pupil.

"You don't feel much the better for having to stay in all day."

"Thank you; I seem to get stronger with every day that passes. How much I owe to you and Mr Weir!"

"You do all that is possible in return. He often says you will be of more use to him than a journeyman."

The boy's delicate face was deep with colour. He gratefully answered, "As I am stronger I shall hope to do much for Mr Weir."

"Who is calling me?" pleasantly asked Saul, entering at the moment.

"Arthur is wishing he could work hard and help you."

Saul Weir sat down on some piled planks, and drew the boy to him. "What do you want to do that for?"

"To repay your care of me, and become useful at the trade," answered Penryllon, frankly.

"Which is a little too rough for you, my boy, with all your gallant efforts to master it. The lighter parts will suffice for a long time to come. And now for the orders, please?"

Penryllon handed a letter and telegram to his friend. Weir started—he found the message was from America. And when he read it he smiled:

Been successful after hard fighting. It is at the Watergate. Am returning with documents. Edred accompanies me to New York.

"Yes, this is satisfactory," he said to himself reflectively, thinking out all it conveyed. 'Been successful,' that meant Merry had secured the contents of the case. 'Hard fighting,' that meant opposition, which could scarcely proceed from Hugh Edred, since he journeyed back to the capital with him. 'It is at the Watergate,' that meant there really was some valuable deposit; and "More's the pity," said Saul, quietly folding the paper, and handing it to Daisy to put in his home-made desk: and at the Watergate—wherever that was—it might lie for all it would be disturbed by him. Of course, when Merry returned, they would proceed there together, but until then he should not trouble to expend even a thought upon it.

He noticed that Arthur looked disappointed, and guessed the cause.

"There is no mention of your friend; but no doubt we shall have a letter before very long. And now to see what this contains,—an order, possibly."

Saul opened the letter, hastily glanced through it, paused, trying to recollect, shook his head not recollecting, and read it again more slowly. This was the memorandum in full:—

RATCLIFF STREET, SHADWELL

CUBWHELP NEPHEWS,
DEALERS IN ALL KINDS OF APPLIANCES FOR
TRAVELLING MENAGERIES, CARAVANS, SHOWS, CIRCUSES, AND ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

ORDERS PROMPTLY ATTENDED TO. ALL WORK OF THE BEST QUALITY.

SAUL WEIR.

323

March 24th.

Mr Weir.

Sir,

Your employer, Mr Sawyer, fitted some strong beams inside one of our lion dens; you will perhaps remember the occurrence? If so, we will thank you to fit us two similar supports at your earliest convenience. We've some timber upon the premises which may do. Yours, &c.,

Cubwhelp Nephews.

No; he did not remember any transaction of the kind having occurred whilst in Mr Sawyer's employ. Such exhibitions *had* visited Ramsgate, but he could not call to mind having done any work for them. That need not affect the present order. He felt much obliged to them, and would go on with his tools in the morning. Now there was the evening's work, always as important to Mr Weir as the day's. They closed the shop, had tea, and settled to its engagements.

Very cheerful looked the little sitting-room when the curtains were drawn, the table book-strewn, and an evening's study in full progress. Wonderful advance was made with the learning; widening circles of knowledge opened at their approach; and in company they did some excellent reading, take it altogether. It would be difficult to say which of the three revelled most in the enjoyable hours thus spent. Saul's pleasure was great at the confident looking up to him by that friendless girl and boy. And he united them in that peaceful, happy home, with the innocent, protecting simplicity only discovered in pure and noble character. He was far too high and great of soul to think of danger to himself in it. He desired to see both happy, both industrious, both improving in learning; and did not so much set himself up as their instructor as their fellow-student. Never a man has thrilled others with such sympathy, but the world has been left better, with a new force of unison to struggle with the discord. Great souls give greatness, however little be their day, and that day's opportunity. This could not have been manifested higher than when Saul gave a strong assent to Daisy's doing her utmost to cheer and gladden the lonely life of Rupert Redland. She had told him all concerning her solemn promise, and he discerned the trace of long reverie over it, as though there was a lingering doubt about its propriety and justice to Saul; still, he discovered her desire to fulfil the wish of their mourned friend. He, with exquisite feeling said, "It is a hallowed friendship;" and that seemed to settle its basis at once. According to his creed, no thought of self should stand in the way of compliance with the wishes of the dead: things sacred met with blind obedience at the hands of

Saul Weir. His loving regard for Archie's memory was so finely strained, he would have consented to any sacrifice: and there was something of that in it—the exclusive possession of Daisy's affection heightening its value materially in his eyes. But dispositions such as his are regardless of self-suffering where a solemn behest is involved.

And the more he learned of Daisy's nature, the more inestimable did it appear. But who can fully learn the nature of a child? For childhood is one great sea which no man nor woman has ever sounded the depths of—nay, or ever will; because, like Love and Heaven, it is infinite, and human knowledge can only penetrate a very little way. All our deep-sea soundings of childhood bring us but slender riches compared with those unknown and never guessed. No time, nor age, nor wisdom exhausts, and scarcely begins, this science, which, unlike all others, is without any limit or boundary. More various than the mystery of the stars, full of deeper beauty than the colour of the flowers, there is music which no man can tone the notes of, and wisdom that leaves the schools all far behind. The fragrance and the bloom of life, it is also the ever-present reminder amongst us of the immortal.

Saul had also shown his regard for Archie's memory in the beautiful manner of producing his poems. And when published they attracted a good deal of attention. It somehow broke upon people that a genuine poet was dead. Away, out from a lovely seaboard nook of a sunny land, with only the great flush of the sky on the great flood of the wave for company, a sad poet once went forth to agony of solitude and unsatisfied desire. Want, the heritage of genius, was his portion, and the sorry shadow of a splendid poverty rested for ever upon a shattered life. And when dying, in a sweet, more sheltered resting-place amidst the mountains, a good priest, called in to soothe the last few moments, asked him from whence he came. "I came from the sea," he said; "I go to the stars!" Herein, more eloquently than by many words, is spoken the destiny of the true poet. Upward, from the illimitable to the infinite, from the great unsatisfactory to

the eternal calm, from the surging tumult to the everlasting rest; and seed-notes are dropped upon the flight, which take root and bud and blossom into glorious music—but no call of love coming too late can bring back from stars to sea again. It too often requires the last splendid soaring ere men take measure of the singer in their midst; but the wide starry fields of light and love where He walks who calls the poet spirits unto Him, will never cease to bloom with the fair immortelle for those whom the gods loved all too well.

Arthur, not being strong yet, retired to bed early—so soon, indeed, as their happy readings were over for the evening. Then Daisy would sit at needlework, while Saul was engaged in still deeper studies, breaking off at intervals for a word with the little girl. Upon this particular evening both studies and talk were interrupted by a visit from their pleasant neighbour, Mlle. Bernardin, who just ran in with her usual impetuous good-nature for a hurried “How do you do?” Always too full of work to stay long, she yet liked to pay a flying visit now and then. Saul was of an intensely grateful nature, and would never forget her goodness in the hour of Daisy’s trouble; therefore he was always courteously kind, see her when he would.

Daisy, girl-like, entertained warm partiality for the vivacious Frenchwoman who bestowed so much notice upon her, and taught her so many fanciful and tasteful arts. Daisy was quick, apt, grateful, clever,—and with such combined application, it was not very extraordinary if Adrienne did make something unusually proficient out of her young friend. Thus between the two of them—the man at her head, the woman at her hands, and both at her heart,—all promised well; and there was every probability of Daisy growing up to be exceptionally gifted.

“See, pretty one, I have brought you some more odds and ends for the patchwork!” saying which, she turned out of a small bag the pieces of silk and velvet saved for the purpose. By this aid Daisy was making progress with a quilt, the pattern of which was arranged with no little taste.

“Thank you very much, dear!” said the child, admiring

their pretty colours. "And, do you know, we have been to see my sister to-day (Adrienne's quick eyes darted a keen glance in Saul's direction), and I told her what beautiful things you give me, and all you have taught me to make!"

"Did you!" said Mlle. Bernardin, with a sweet smile; "and your sister is very well, I hope?"

Saul was repairing an accident to the metal-work of his organ. He took from his pocket a small leather case he always carried about with him. It contained implements of the finest temper, bright and clean as a set of surgical instruments, specially adapted for the work before him. He looked up:

"No, Mlle. Bernardin, Miss Sylvester is not well; because she is not happy." It was an involuntary remark, almost as though the sequel to a deep train of thought. Daisy, with anxious surprise, wondered how he could have detected what had escaped herself. "The lady she is with happens to be one of the unappreciative kind; and, owing to a poor state of health, is very trying." And he turned to his work again. Daisy felt more satisfied; yes, she had noticed that also. Her friend was looking thoughtfully down at the pieces of silk—rose-colour and greys—all mixed up together.

"I'll run and fetch my patchwork," said Daisy, starting off.

"Your little pupil will grow to be very clever, Mr Weir, I think."

"I'm glad you do; I hope so," deftly filing a slender rib of iron.

"Yes; and she possesses the most amiable qualities. I had ample opportunity of observing them under trial and sorrow."

"You had, indeed; and your kind friendship helped to support her." Still not looking up, fitting the iron to its groove.

"And she is pretty—too pretty not to be generally admired. It is next to impossible for any one to be much in her company without loving her. Do you know, I have often thought poor Mr Campbell grew strongly attached to her."

"Indeed!" looking up sharply, tossing his work aside, and rising with an abruptness he seldom displayed. "Perhaps it will be as well to treat the prepossessions of the dead with the silence of respect."

She had lost a loved father, had been wounded often when his fondnesses and fancies were dragged up for the topic of common talk; so could appreciate Saul's remark, without taking offence at it. But it seemed in no way irrelevant (being a simple and candid person) to add, "And I think, so far as her sorrow at your loss would permit of, she gave him in return her warmest affection."

"Do you?" said the man of plain dealing, putting some more coals on the fire.

"Oh, I'm sure of it," said the charming neighbour, ingenuously; "and over my work I often sit wondering which had her heart the most, he or Mr Redland, who seems such an exceptional young man, so full of feeling, so tender in his manner; ay, and so very learned."

The poor artisan, self-educated, who had patiently been training her in wisdom's paths, felt a great pang, not to be defined, but of infinite pain.

"Yes," he said, sitting down with a quiet air, "Mr Redland is scholarly in philosophy. That is rather out of my way; my lines in learning and in life have been substantial, plain, and practical."

"Yes; but Mr Redland is as full of sympathy with humanity as yourself, and in a different way as kind-hearted."

"Mr Redland is a gentleman and a scholar—I am a working carpenter, learning the letters without the philosophy."

He placed some books in order, made them level, and straightened the brown paper with which they were carefully covered.

Altogether, he liked their evenings best without the aid of the amiable neighbour; but then he knew she erred out of the unaffected frankness of her nature. And there are no people so foolish as the over-frank ones, who do more harm than all the mischief-makers put together.

He soon got over it, however, and with characteristic patience returned to his fine piece of metal-work.

Daisy entered with her quilt, and while the ingenuous neighbour spread it over her knees, admiring its neat sewing together, and adjustment of colours, the little girl stood by, a hand on the back of her chair, watching intently the dexterous turn to the fair milliner's handling of the work. And while the two talked their important nothings, the carpenter succeeded in repairing the accident, and began to play tuneful and harmonious strains, which seemed to make grandeur of their common life.

She left them soon after, and Saul returned to his books, while Daisy laid supper.

Next morning Mr Weir set off to see what he could make out of the order received while he was away.

His first introduction to Shadwell did not impress him—indeed he thought it one of the most unpleasant neighbourhoods he had ever been in.

The dirty streets thronged by a rough crowd; the odd marts hardly to be dignified as respectable; the suspicious-looking courts and alleys, which few would have dared to venture through; the old tumble-down edifices, with blackened walls, and grim interiors shadowing the secrets of many a crime; hideous lodging-houses, tenanted by ragged birds of passage; second-hand furniture-rooms, choked up with musty and horrible goods; cheap china and glass warehouses; and those devoted to equipping the poorer class of sailors; old wardrobe depositories; bird and beast shops; and a place dirtier and dingier than the rest, bearing a discoloured CUBWHELP NEPHEWS above the low-pitched doorway.

The shop was long and narrow—cages of all sorts lined it; bars and poles, perches and roosts, were resting against the walls; sliding bottoms, wire-doors, monkey-rings, beast stalls and mangers; racks, troughs, pitch-forks, whips, brooms, rakes, and all other things incidental to menagerie usage;—and Mr Weir thought it a curious collection.

An old woman came forward to ask his business.

He told her he had come to do some work at the dens.

She turned on her heel and led the way to a place at the back, where larger furniture of the caravans was stored.

How they got some of it through the shop Weir could not understand.

"You did work for us in Ramsgate," said the woman, laconically.

"No, I did not; but some of the others may have done. Where is the den?"

She pointed out a huge lion-cage, strongly barred. Four of the bars were raised to permit of entering it.

There was plenty of hard timber about, suitable for the purpose, and he set down his basket, asking, "Have you a bench for me to work on?"

Yes, she had that; pointed it out, and asked shortly if he wanted anything else: replied to in the negative, she went her way.

Saul Weir stood, hands on hips, looking at the huge contrivance, taking in its dimensions, and calculating his work.

He entered it, took out his "two-foot," and began to measure.

While doing this, the great bars which had been raised descended, with a dull noise, causing him to turn his head; but he went on with the dimensions, thinking the thing an accident, and he dotted down with his accustomed exactness. Having concluded this, he did not mean waiting, and sent up a lusty shout for "Cubwhelp!"

The name seemed to reverberate through the place. It was a majestic sort of roar a lion might really have startled the echoes with.

But the only answer was a peal of laughter; and Saul Weir became anxious. The den was of enormous strength; neither lion's paw nor man's hand could force it.

A woman glided from some place near by—a painfully black and white woman, with feline tread, and swift bitterness in her piercing eyes.

"Trapped, Carpenter Weir!" she cried, with a shrill laugh.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said he, and his tone of disgust irritated her.

"Yes, it's me! And we'll cry quits soon, my heir, for Liverpool and Herongate favours! I owe you a reckoning."

"The only sort of reckoning you would ever have the honesty to pay," he replied, with grave and indignant anger.

She brought a chair, and insolently sat down to stare at him. And verily like a galled lion he paced the narrow den.

"What does this mean?" he asked, stopping abruptly, his hands grasping the bars like a Samson.

"That you do not leave this place until we are told where the Treasure lies, which of course you know by this time."

"I am not likely to leave yet awhile, then," answered he, resolutely.

"We calculate it won't take long to make you disclose it."

"Cubwhelp Nephews shall answer to some one for this."

She laughed cunningly. "The business no longer belongs to them. It has been purchased by Jebeson, Wattle, and Crick; none of whom bear yourself much love."

"The feeling is cordially returned. I wish I had the rascals here now." He quivered with anger; his muscular form drawn up with contempt.

One of them slouched from within to answer. "Here's a man named Eli Jebeson, and what have you to say agin him?"

"That he is a ruffianly scoundrel—probably the worst unchanged."

The burly fellow strode to the cage, with an oath, to raise the bars, but Mrs Steele held his arm back forcibly. "Be careful! Wild beasts are dangerous."

Jebeson drew back before the wrathful eyes meeting his.

"Cowards!" said Weir, contemptuously, turning to estimate the strength of the place.

"Ah, you may look round; but you don't get out o' this as you did t'other!" hoarsely threatened Jebeson.

"Until you inform us where the Treasure is," added the woman, cunningly; "when, after its removal, and we are safely away with it, you will be released."

"Spare yourself detail of your plans ; I tell you plainly that will never be heard from me."

Wattle, the corpulent member of this precious fraternity, emerged from the shop—smoking, after his old Dutch fashion, looking more slothful than ever, and as contentedly full of enjoyment.

"Caught him, then !" said he, with oily, glutinous smacking of the overlapping lips. "And he makes a good show—a prize show, don't 'e ?" with a gross laugh at his own joke.

"You'll show up in a stronger place than this shortly, my friend," said Weir, folding his arms ; and the awful look upon his face was solemn as that of justice.

"He's got some pluck to threaten us from in there," said the obese member of the firm, laying his fat hands on the back of Mrs Steele's chair ; "we'll take the closer care of you for it, my fine fellow."

"Of course only until we are told where the Treasure may be," the woman softly amended, with the fascinating look of a more than usually hungry fox.

Jebeson left them, and returned with an old beef-bone at the end of a pitch-fork. He put it roughly through the bars. "Feedin' time !" he growled, jeeringly, while the others burst into a fit of laughter.

Weir caught the fork, and sent it back through the bars with expression. It struck his tormentor, inflicting a deep wound.

"I told you he was dangerous," said his wife, for such was her relationship.

Weir stood by the bars. "Open this cage," he demanded, in a tone that meant he would no longer brook refusal ; and he laid firm hands, that were iron-like and strong, upon those bars which it seemed his magnificent wrath would twist and wrench from their sockets.

The fat man waddled back into the shop, to be nearer the protection of Shadwell.

The bars resisted Saul's great effort. He was balked, and stepped back, glancing up at their massive setting.

"Framed specially," he muttered; and the peril seemed increased.

He had not said where he was bound for upon starting forth, and no one would know. At the mercy of such miscreants, there was little hope of release unless he gave them the information required; and that he certainly would not do, if they murdered him for it. Thus his prospect looked dark.

Friendship is fine in proportion to its sacrifice; he would give his life before Merry should be wronged, and that hard journey be rendered fruitless.

The day passed. They came at intervals to see if he relented; and his stolid, unyielding manner goaded them. Whatever apprehension he might experience within himself, he would let them see none of it.

"Oh, he'll give in," said Wattle, fresh from whisky, panting with exertion, taking care not to go too near, since run he could not.

And when the shadows closed in, and up at a wall some light glimmered, Saul Weir began to feel an awful sense of loneliness and peril.

Cramped and wearied in the narrow compass, worn with worry, anxious concerning those at home, suspicious of his keepers if he slept, and so keenly angered at this new outrage he was unable to bear it with his usual calm fortitude,—his position was a trial both of endurance and courage.

And as time passed, and he in fancy was back with them at the humble but happy home, it made the unwonted situation the more unbearable. Then he recollected Mr Redland was to call; and the thought that he and Daisy might then be sitting by the fireside did not improve it. Of a certainty there would be anxiety at his being detained so late, but they would never suspect the truth. There was no chivalrous, dying Archie to discover his dungeon this time; no brave, fond child close by to aid in his release;—and this crime was perpetrated for coffers he would not have exchanged his basket of tools for.

He was always so contented—looking happily upon occur-

rences of the most disagreeable nature, and making the best of unpleasantness of whatever kind,—it disconcerted him to find himself thus *hors de combat*. One of the hopeful spirits of the world, who cherish hope in others, however gloomy the times, he now felt drearily unequal to supplying himself with hope.

It would end in a tough struggle for dear life, he did verily believe. •

CHAPTER XX. .

TOMKINS BROTHERS IN NEW YORK.

THE fame of the Brothers Tomkins had preceded them, and they met with an ovation in New York.

The honourables of the city conducted them to see the lions, and the ladies of the episcopacy with advanced ideas "tea'd" them, until any but a brotherhood to whom infirmity was unknown, would have grown giddy upon such a pinnacle of popularity.

The introductions came through Suffolk people, and those with whom the Great Tomkinses had originally done business.

Immediately after arrival they contrived to dispense with hotel accommodation and expenses altogether, condescending to be entertained by families whose standing was unexceptionable, and whose religious convictions were without a flaw.

Considering that in England the Brothers held virtuous dislike to the Dissenting denominations (chiefly on account of the demonstration of affection outside their chapels, to say nothing of the love-feasts, which the Brothers were never bold enough to inquire into but disliked the name of extremely), they were pretty tolerant, and they created a pronounced effect.

There was something fresh about the three straight figures with the solemn manner and Oxford-mixture suits. America's first view of their faultless make-up, crowned by the inimitable white hats with the black bands, was an aroused one; and it was not long before well-known photographers on Broadway waited upon them with pressing solicitations: and as this was proposed with distinct repudiation of terms (copy-

right to revert to the enterprising artist), proceeds to go to a religious purpose, the Brothers after grave deliberation consented, and a magnificent representation of the three was produced. It caused a profound sensation. And if the crowds outside the windows occasionally lost themselves as to which was which, they were reverently stared at; while Wall Street speculators drew closed hands briskly down the ornamental appendages to their chins.

It was circulated that they were very wealthy: it was known they were unmarried: and venerable ladies with apricot-like cheeks thoughtfully turned over expensive toilet preparations, and tried to look languidly pleasing out of eyes America had long since avoided upon principle. They little knew the insensibility of the decorous trio come amongst them. Finding bazaars contagiously prevalent, the Brothers once for all gave it out that they discountenanced good works when made a commerce of; they thought the system diametrically opposed to Apostle Paul's injunctions, and could not lend their aid, which would imply their sanction, to any such object. They were so very particular in all such matters, and thought a protest should really be entered by some one's example. "You see, Brother," said Adam privately, addressing Seth, "if we are let in for that sort of thing we shall have to stand a pretty penny! Won't do. We've come out to make money, not to drop it!"

In spite of the throng on Broadway the people cleared to permit the Brothers Tomkins to pass, when they appeared in public on the formal promenade. They walked as usual arm in arm, looking neither right nor left, with the spring of the heel more marked, the ebony sticks held at more systematic angles, and even New York, which sees many singular appearances, gazed wonderingly; and the awe-struck had it they were millionaires!

One man, a greater even than Dobson, who had been looking at enormous bills some slovenly poster had put up awry—bills depicting the biggest show in the world,—*he* caught sight of them and slid up instantly, his practised mind calculating inestimable advantages to accrue to his unrivalled com-

ination. His briskness did not surprise the Brothers, who, with a grave, uniform bow, passed on. They did not know him, but had a suspicion he was something in the subscription begging way. Benevolence and genial feeling were so stamped upon the favoured countenances of the kindly-featured Messrs Tomkins it made them peculiarly susceptible to being called upon to give; and as they never gave, it made them slightly irritable.

The Brothers were so intensely polite and agreeable they created a very prepossessing impression; and the Avenues were sociably alert with the kind hospitality for which they are noted.

The Brothers devoted themselves perseveringly to walking, far more so than in England; they might have been walking for a wager. Questioned concerning their unmistakable exercise, they replied that they were desirous of seeing all that was possible of the fine city. And really the Devil on Three Sticks could not have turned up in more extraordinary places, for the purpose of seeing the city.

They kept at it with such unflagging zeal, New York was known as intimately as Ipswich. Still the object of it was not achieved. And the Brothers looked down glumly, legs and shoe-leather were both wearing, and it seemed that their virtue would be its own and only reward. When, lo! on a fine March morning they all together descried three figures, and one was the man they wanted. Then Adam shook hands with Noah across Brother Seth, and they gravely stepped into a *café* for two cups of chocolate. Noah stood by the door looking out. The party went by, and soon afterwards Tomkins Brothers followed.

It was Merry Tatbergast and Hugh Edred, in a better state than when we last parted with them. As soon as they could travel, the return journey was made. Since the death of his mother, and the horrible affray in his cottage, the miner had taken a dislike to it and the mode of life; he determined to place his savings in security, and enjoy civilization. He accompanied his friend and the boy, to whom he had become strongly attached, to New York, for the purpose of seeing

them off by an early vessel, because Merry was feverishly anxious to return to England.

There had been no attempt by Edred to put further obstacle in the way. The papers taken from the case Merry read while both were lying in danger, hovering betwixt life and death. There was an end to the secret—the hiding-place was known. He promised, however, when they were well enough to discuss such matters, to furnish Edred with the assurances he required in right and justice. This was to be sent on to New York as soon as possible, and Merry pledged his word that neither himself nor Saul Weir would touch the Treasure until they received his permit.

Merry had now proceeded thus far on the return journey. The document was safe upon his person, and he felt at last to be making satisfactory progress; and his heart beat quick at the thought of soon being back with his darling Jessie.

Strikingly did the magnificent figure of Hugh show up against the crowds passing him; the massive breadth and stalwartness of the Western settler made pigmies of the citizens. And he looked more of a Hercules upon the tract of bricks than he did even in those solitary fastnesses where he had reigned their giant lord.

The Brothers Tomkins had not bargained for the addition of this life-guardsmen, and decided to wait to catch their man alone. They saw them enter one of the moderate hotels, and the Brothers also at once proceeded to the hotel where they had stopped upon their arrival. Noah was sent on to bid farewell to their kind entertainers, and to say they were suddenly recalled to England. Seth proceeded to lie in wait for Tattergast's walking out, when he would be invited to spend a quiet hour or two chatting over that affair at the Herongate.

Adam ordered up two bottles of port wine, and four glasses: the Brothers Tomkins would not be backward in hospitality upon meeting a countryman in a strange land. The wine he put back on a sideboard until wanted, also the glasses; in one was a fine, white powder, not there when the servant brought them up.

Noah returned with their valise. They had dinner, but no Seth appeared : afternoon passed, and that worthy was still on the watch. He was rewarded at last. Mr Tattergast came out with a rush to post some letters, and nearly ran over the sedate gentleman at the corner.

"Good gracious !" cried Mr Tomkins ; "if it isn't the young man we had the pleasure of meeting at our friend Masheter's. Why, who would have thought of meeting you here ? And how do you do ?"

"You'll excuse me," said Merry in a hurry ; "I'm off to catch the mail—back in five minutes." And he was off like a harlequin, for he held long epistles to Jessie and Saul, and a letter from Herrick to his friend.

"The unrighteous foot shall stumble, and the neck of the vicious be broken ;" muttered Seth sententiously, pulling up his glove where it had slackened from looseness of the elastic.

True enough, the young man returned the way he went, and then found time to shake hands with this proper-looking person. He had particularly noted the Brothers Tomkins that day at the Herongate. They rather excited his mimicry ; but he forgot the oddity of a first impression in this strange land. The sight of Seth was like something from home, and seemed to draw him a link nearer to it. He did not stop to think that they might have been of the plotting company denounced by Saul ; it did not indeed seem probable, and Merry was too elated by his own success to go into that.

"My brothers *will* be pleased to see you. We are stopping close by. Such a curious family history—we were talking to Masheter about it ; he has no doubt whatever of the genuineness of your claim. I hope the other young man is quite well. What are you doing out here ? Employment of some sort, I suppose—and I hope a rich blessing may rest upon all your undertakings. This world is so full of snares ; life is so short, it behoves us all to make the best of present opportunity. But here we are ; do come in, and shake hands with my brothers, who will be so glad to see an English face again."

Merry was just feeling the same, and with his usual amiable light-heartedness stepped inside with the highly respectable gentleman so courteously leading the way.

"Whom have we here?" asked Mr Adam, with a smile of great beneficence, while he and Brother Noah advanced in line as though joined in a twinship of Anglo-Saxon welcome.

"Why, our young friend whom we were so interested in that day at the Herongate; don't you remember?" Seth explained.

"To be sure. This is a pleasant surprise—do sit down. Take Mr Weir's hat, Noah!"

Noah took it gingerly, wishing their young friend would take it himself. "I can't stop long," said Merry. "I want to run down to the docks, to see when a boat is starting."

"We can give you all the information required. We leave ourselves to-morrow, and are provided with time-tables."

They handed one. Merry glanced through, saw boat, date, and hour, and felt more comfortable.

"That was a singular situation when you last met us. Did anything come of it?" asked Mr Adam, with a kindly patronising manner.

"A great deal," replied their visitor, coolly, "in the money way!"

"Dear me!" said all the Brothers together, raising their eyebrows as if by mechanism, and looking very interested.

"Yes," added Mr Tattergast, complacently; "it will soon be our turn now, I think."

"I congratulate you," said Mr Adam, offering to shake hands. Merry, who was looking at the time-table, thought him offering a cigar, and said, "No, thank you."

Mr Adam glanced quickly in uncertainty at his brothers.

"Perhaps Mr Weir will take wine with us," said Seth, affably.

"Certainly!" assented Mr Adam, with the cordial twang which makes it a discourtesy to decline; and he looked towards Brother Noah, who proceeded to pour the wine out at the sideboard.

He handed a glass to Mr Adam, Seth helped himself, and placed one for Noah who waited next upon the guest.

"Pleased to see you, sir," said Mr Adam, drinking; his brothers nodded and did the same.

"Thank you," replied Merry; "and a pleasant journey to all of us," with his old happy laugh, setting the glass down empty.

"Another!" cried Mr Adam; "don't be afraid of it—good wine hurts no one. It's the abominable adulterated stuff that is so poisonous."

Mr Noah refilled all their glasses.

"Here's to the two countries, England and America!" proposed Mr Tattergast, with enthusiasm.

"And here, sir, is to the Treasure of Boadicea!" exclaimed Mr Adam: all the gentlemen drained their glasses.

"You may well call this wine good," said Mr Tattergast, "if goodness is strength."

"Not always, sir; we are not strong." The self-sufficient meekness of this remark forcibly impressed Mr Tattergast.

"It is making me feel quite bewildered," said Merry, with a strange look—"an unusual thing; but I have been ill, and—I ought not to have taken it."

"Try another to set that right," pressed Mr Seth.

Their victim could but feebly shake his head; the delicacy of his handsome face turned to a pallid hue; he tottered upon his chair, and Seth hastened to his support. "Good gracious!" he said in a tone of surprise, "he is ill; how very unfortunate! Poor fellow! I sadly fear he is suffering. Do you revive a little, my dear young friend? Try to raise yourself; come, make an effort, for our sakes."

They bore him gently to the sofa with soothing words and tender handling, Mr Adam softly repeating texts of comfort in his ear.

He seemed terribly distressed with it, and his hand went feebly up to where his precious papers were hidden in his vest.

"Do not trouble about anything," murmured Seth in a tone of anxious solicitude, a finger upon his pulse with all the gravity of a great physician.

He became unconscious, and those over him looked at one another.

"I'm very sorry," said Mr Adam. "Why, the American wine must be nastier stuff than the English. Who can put faith in anything! I declare the noxious compounds now sold might injure a commercial!"

Mr Seth was (as though absent-mindedly) washing out Merry's glass with a lot of wine which he tossed into the fire. "Consequences of excess," he said quietly, "upon a constitution already debilitated by dissipation."

Then they solemnly addressed one another upon the vice of drinking, viewed in its relation to the backsliding of young men.

Noah was saying something about the moral darkness of the age when he accidentally turned the lamp out.

Before it was lighted again Adam had possessed himself of the papers—a long sheet of writing and a letter. They stood in line by the table, heads bent down to a level, reading them. They looked at one another with a serious smile, and clasped each other's hands, then turned on their heels exact to a hair.

"Let us see how our poor young friend is getting on," said Adam, going to him; thus stooping, his back to the others, he replaced the papers in his vest.

"Ring the bell, Brother Noah," asked he.

Brother Noah rang the bell; a servant answered it immediately.

"Our friend is taken very unwell, have you a really good doctor, of Church of England principles, anywhere about here? Please do not send for any one unless of the very highest respectability."

The servant went to his master with this fastidious message.

Anon, a thin, long-faced individual appeared, who, with a brusque nod, passed on to the patient, opened his apparel in a trice and felt his heart, then applied an instrument to which he held his ear. He put away his instrument without speaking, with apparent roughness placed the patient in another position, briskly had off his boots and felt his feet; then for the first time seemed to notice the three standing together.



It was fond of phenomena, and stared at them intently.—Page 343.

each with the same profoundly sympathetic cast. And much was he struck by their similarity of feature,—it presented a phenomenon. He was fond of phenomena, and stared at them intently.

They did not flinch, but stared back; and their gaze was that of innocent lambs, his the glare of the grim wolf Science.

"Been ill long?" asked the doctor, jerking his thumb to indicate the white, helpless form upon the sofa.

"Dear no!" said Mr Adam. Then, in a tone of poignant sorrow, "our friend has been drinking heavily; we sadly feared it; we are most grieved."

"Been drinking, what?" asked the medical man, curtly.

"Port, doctor; fine old crusted port. Highly recommended to us. Let me offer you a glass."

The doctor waved this aside. "Been suffering from wounds," again examining the invalid.

"It has occurred to us doctor, our friend may be a bilious subject; port does not suit every one." Having said this, Mr Seth put his hands behind him and stood erect with the dignity of having opinions of their own.

The doctor looked round the room. "Pen and ink, please? And will you touch the bell?"

Mr Noah touched the bell. The doctor wrote, and handed it to the servant: "To my house. Bring an answer." He quickly left the room.

While he was gone the doctor had his patient on to the floor, face downwards, with loosened cravat and a restorative applied to the nostrils. He chafed the cold hands, and wrapped the feet warmly, without asking aid from or noticing the three gentlemen; who, standing by like the moneyed men they were, looked down upon this professional person engaged in duties for which he would be paid—but not by them.

The servant returned with an emetic. It was forced down the patient's throat, and after its effects he rallied, regular respiration returned, and the doctor bit his lip much gratified. He replaced his patient upon the sofa, left some directions, promised to look in on the morrow, and flitted out the same brusque, long, thin individual who had entered.

A sigh of relief proceeded from Mr Adam.

"That never can be a practitioner of Church of England principles," said he, looking at Seth with concern.

The manager of the establishment came up to know if he could do anything, adding—

"A friend of yours, I believe, gentlemen?"

"Yes," answered Mr Adam, in a tone of anxiety; "that is what we are in distress about, as we return to England to-morrow morning."

"He shall be carefully tended, sir," said the manager, respectfully.

"Thanks, many thanks. Our friend will make it right with you."

"Our friend" was removed to bed, to recover or not, as the case might be.

Before leaving in the morning, they placed a Church Service close to his hand, with this note:

DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—

Your sudden indisposition has troubled us. We trust, if you recover, you will carefully peruse the services of the Church, without which we are unsound even though in robust health.—Your well-wishers,

TOMKINS BROTHERS.

Then they departed, to take possession of the long-schemed-for Treasure.

And Hugh with Herrick waited and searched alternately, anxious and confounded by the startling disappearance of their friend. Edred said his conviction was, that Merry had set sail. But Herrick said "No." He knew his friend too well to believe that of him.

Edred thought the matter over in his usual vigorous style, and came to a decision concerning the course to be followed.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HERON'S HAUNT.

FOLLOW the beautiful wild-fowl to its haunt. The tangled, reedy covert; a water-way, the Venice of the kingfisher. Where bulrushes are lofty trees to lizards playing on the banks, and reeds strike one another with a music all their own. Where the dragon-flies rob forget-me-nots of colour, and poise with proud delight above the rippling stream. There is a nook so lovely and so still we follow the wild-fowl to its haunt, and wonder why the restless world beyond is so large and full of noise.

Let us picture the scene, before we turn to the incidents which occurred there. In summer the branches of aged trees formed a trellised canopy above, close overlaid and interknit, making the glade dusky, shedding dim, green light. Boughs of widespread monarchs, that had stood a hundred years or more, shielded the retreat by day from the glare of sunlight, and the inspection of chance passers-by. At night some star contrived to gleam back to itself innocently, when the water permitted: and when the moon stole through a crevice, the glen was fairy-like. Here lightning had fallen swift across the dazzled eyes of angry herons, and flashed on the water till the bittern flew from her home dismayed. Snow, too, in winter, floated down, flake by flake gently, so gently the inmates could not resent it. But with it all the seclusion was complete. From dawn to sunset, in all seasons, this sanctuary of dear Nature, so fond of creating for herself such grand cathedrals, was solemn with pensive stillness or magnificent with praise.

The glen had for ornament—to such use a painter would

have likened it, although it had been in its day of real practical service—an old stone two-arched bridge. One arch spanned the stream and formed a watergate; the gate was rotting now; its double doors, green with decay, were hanging by rusty hinges. At one time they had been used to meet, stemming the flow of water. The other arch upon the bank of the stream was walled up, bricken and massive; a spacious hollow withinside, silent and sacred as the nethermost chamber of the Pyramids.

The secluded nook was never visited; without trespassing there was no approach. Strangers knew nothing about it—would scarcely have cared to go wandering round even had such been the case. As for the owner of the estate it is doubtful if he had ever seen it, or would have taken the trouble to explore its tangled surrounding twice, since the way was impracticable upon horseback.

Haunted by the herons standing down by the grey stone, their ashen plumage harmonising with the scene, the black belt on their neck and breast deepening their sombre appearance. Sometimes they looked profoundly wise; ay, made the very owls appear but dullards, so reflective was their motionless attitude. It was all false, they were but watching the floundering of some poor wretch of a frog upon which they would pounce voraciously; presenting a long bill, and pinning their victim with a precision qualifying them for legal practice. The fish, too, were not over fond of the herons, and avoided the shallows, or they found themselves borne up in air for a bird's-eye view of their native element.

High flew the herons, head between the shoulders, legs stretched out, looking more awkward than the bitterns, who made graceful ascents at sunset, with desolate cries. These discordant notes, like the old stage-horn, announced they were off, and the other inhabitants of the glen thought it no loss.

A more important bird than either was the green heron, who kept moodily apart, generally upon the bridge, looking discontentedly through the dim leafy vista. He was disdainful enough, with his deep green crown, almost expecting those obscure folk below to bring the fish up to him.

His bill was of rare colour—a beautiful greenish brown—altogether unsuited for sporting in the fens. His quill-feathers were of lustrous gold-green; no demure quiet colouring for this courtly personage. Even his legs finished off his resplendent self with style, being of a noticeable yellow. As he rose to the trees whereon he sat in parliament, there was symmetry in contrast with the stalty members of his lower neighbours.

The vale was of some length, winding with the stream, wooded banks rising upward upon either hand to a great height, from which one might look down upon the richest natural scene in Suffolk. A dense, low sloping-vista of intersecting trees, bound up with shrubs, and laced thickly with brilliant creepers; grey and green in manifold variations, a richly limned picture, the eye taking in the minutest tracery, and catching all the luxuriant gradations of its wealth. Above, the clear blue heavens; below, the deep-toned moss. In autumn, such a mosaic of tawny ferns and glorious leaves as made these banks great corridors magnificent with gold. And midway always, that old stone bridge, broad and bulky, like a fortalice guarding the inviolate privacy of this domain. With the romantic gate, from which the estate received its name; and those shadowy herons blending with the mystic seclusion of the spot.

Like some casket among the dales of England's lowlands, this Suffolk glen was rich as the treasury it enshrined.

When sunrise tinted the trees, column by column, and the area was flushed with iris hues, birds came down to bathe. There was fluttering of snowy plumage, and a silver gleam beside the stream; the sluggard flag uncurled its bladed leaf and was sprinkled in the dawn, while its lovely charge, the fleur-de-lis, rose with a languid grace to greet the sun. It was the world of the morning, here in this bower-like valley, and matin-song seemed its natural and befitting utterance. The flashing beetle, that took so long to cross the arch, encumbered by his armour, paused to listen, or else to gaze with blinking eyes at the strong sun who would be high before he got across.

Hark to the cooing of the wood-pigeons, faintly heard in upper chambers of the trees! Mark the scamper of the conies—not from fear but delight. There is no fear within these boundaries, because men do not come to cause it.

No; there is utter loneliness in this retreat. Many years have passed since the human foot dented the lush grass overgrowing all its pathways, and then it was to do a deed of secrecy in character with this calm, sheltering hiding-place of all that is rich and beautiful.

The valley was a world of sweets, from the time when trees were heavy weighted with the May, to the clouding of the oaks with mistletoe.

Ringdoves knew it well, and came hither to coo the hours away; butterflies rested on the wild roses fearlessly; tiger-moths made the dingle animate; bees left odorous billows of bean-blossoms for the spiral foxgloves; yellow linnets poised upon the hazels which overhung the stream.

Crossed stalks made basket-work of straying stubble, park-palings for countless field-mice; stones embroidered with lichen and encrusted with moss, were each a table-land of wonder to insect explorers scaling the rugged ascent.

Pan might have whiled away his time down there amidst the golden reeds which fringed the glen-built water-arch, where fleet-winged swallows darted to the rivulet; and the bridge might have been as ancient as he. If not that, it had outlasted flourishing priories of Austin canons and Franciscan friars, and a convent of Carmelites, all once close by; it had outlived the great Cardinal's pomp of state and rage for improvement. The old South Sea Director had not touched a brick; and it was reserved for a modern owner with a daring and ingenious cunning to build up the useless arch—there to store the massy chests bearing uncounted treasure. Man and woman at that time came, in the solemn nights of silent autumn, in the dread of discovery, in the red heat of momentous purpose.

And within sound of lowing herds upon the lea it had lain in unbroken security.

The vale was peacefully at rest as was that of Tempe.

When far banks of its sloping water-courses were purpled with the violets or starred by cowslips, and chaster lilies that filled the haunt with perfume, it was of rare loveliness; fauns and dryads should long for no brighter scene. Beautiful, also, when silvery birch-trees were vivid with moonlight; when grey stones damasked the banks in chequered relief; when some swan floated down the stream with stately softness to her nest in the rushes bordering the watergate: there were no naiads, but all else that fancy might devise, and always those strange herons that should be olden guardians of grave secrets.

Plumage of roosting pheasants made the branches gleam by moonlight, and if the beams could touch no pimperlute they flooded golden broom with an undiminished lustre: and again the arch was pre-eminent, more prominent than any feature, when rime silvered the ivy, decking the ancient lock, —delicate tracery, that under the starlight was dimly beautiful.

In winter, even, the grim green yews were ruddied by the robins, and all the mosses on their trunks were changed to frosted silver.

The old boulders up the furrowed slopes might have been the cairns and cromlechs of a people who worshipped by this burn.

Gobelin tapestry could not be wrought in more quaint detail than the greenery around afforded, right up to the brow of the escarpment on either side, where innumerable larches speared the sky. There, upon the pastures, fed the cows and horses of the Herongate, to wander sometimes to these rugged combs, and trample the wild hyacinths beneath their hoofs. Marsh-hens made their nests on the streamlet's bank amidst the green fronds of tapering plants, only molested by the water-rat and newt. The sedges kept off the water-snakes, and there was little else to trouble. Down through the sycamores would strut some peacock from the Herongate, with great confidence, as though the glen belonged to him, and not to the equally as confident herons. Down stepped the peacock daintily, all asway with pride, pecking amongst the golden saxifrage, the crimson trifolium, the celandine and

campanula, dashing the woodbine aside and curving its neck to snap at a brown beetle sheltering under the lady-fern.

Sometimes the woodpecker made himself heard, and the squirrels pricked up their little ears to list; a greater commotion was caused when the sow with her young, after acorns, blundered across the echoing vale. Then the choughs and daws swooped on the upturned worms, and it might have been the heart of a city instead of that of a fastness.

Hind and fawn had often leaped its scarped sides seeking shelter of the fragrant firs; and many a runlet of wine had been quaffed here and at Stag's Covert over the good fat buck brought low. Pheasants up in the serried woods had not always enjoyed the slumberous safety of present times. The purple heath, springy turf, and verdurous hillocks, which formed an elysian warren for innumerable rabbits, once trembled to the long-bow and rang with the horn. It was now one spot at least, preserved from the stain of death. Fresh odour of new-mown hay borne down the vale was preferable to the smell of powder; and the pipe and crook might verily be emblems of its pastoral seclusion. Even occupants of the Herongate dovecotes came hither, and their flight made the leafy copsewood quiver with chaste colour. Myrtles and arbutus grew in thick unpruned clusters, every shrub and tree sacred as in old Druidical forests. There were tangled walls of honeysuckle, extending from the branches of the trees right down to the ragged stones and matting of pine-needles off the old Scotch firs.

Upon a certain moonlight night, the lumbering caravan of Mr Dobson of Panorama fame was on the road above, and Dobson, who was driving, peacefully smoked while enjoying the soft night air of the balmy spring. Withinside, his new lecturer and a man whose general utility it was to aid in erecting the exhibition, were asleep. Dobson was looking out upon the moonlit scene thinking of Tattergast. The old mare jogged steadily on, when all at once Dobson saw three forms turn suddenly from a cross-road and take to a narrow lane, winding down somewhere; and it was so shady and deserted a path his curiosity was greatly exercised. There

was no mistaking them; for one, Noah, was too unpleasantly impressed upon his memory ever to be forgotten. The apparition at that time of the night was peculiar, to say the least of it. "They're up to no good!" muttered Dobson. "I've half a mind to see what it is." It was rather contrary to this honest fellow's principles, but the prejudice with which he regarded those particular gentlemen was very marked. So he aroused his assistants and bade them look after the horse and van, which he pulled up at the lane. "Poachers!" he explained, briefly. "I'm going to surprise 'em." He turned down the lane to follow,—not a trace of them was to be seen; but he went on cautiously, and with difficulty, for it was all in shadow and thick with undergrowth and brambles. Its pathlessness made him the more resolute. The ground descended to what appeared a dismal hollow, and he was really curious to know their business down the glen. This we must now interest ourselves in.

Along that sylvan glade stole the three tall forms, in Indian file, casting shadows, when in the moonlight, of an equal length,—treading with precaution, as though the crackle of crisp leaves and wood must arouse some guardian of the place. Weird, supernatural-looking figures, which the moonlight painted a cadaverous hue: their quick eyes, all wariness and greed, their bated breath hardly drawn for eagerness. They threaded the wild old ways, trod pathless grass hitherto the track only of foxes, mumbled patiently when their heads were caught by out-swaying branches of the trees, and kept close together lest one of their number was cut off from the company. They had never crossed so wild a scene, nor one as beautiful. And the glen had never been intruded upon by so strange a party, nor one as subtle. They would not have been there had they suspected the vehicle they had seen in the distance to have belonged to that unpleasant, outspoken person, Dobson.

A grim-looking company. They might, with their shadowy, saturnine aspect, have served for ghosts haunting some dread region big with legends of old terror. Dead rocks, blown down in gusty storms, on which they set foot indifferently;

were not more black. They brushed the dark sedge, and might have risen three obscene birds about to prey on sacred hidings of the solitude. Dusky moles hied them into the hillocks at their approach, scared by creatures of more soft and burrowing cunning. A lone owl's hoot broke the silence; and afar, sonorous bells swung heavily in the old church tower, proclaiming a midnight, the most memorable that had ever tolled upon the Heron's Haunt.

Above the jewelled tracery of thickets, deep in dew, above the groined arches of this woodland crypt, shone the spangled sky; and in the starlight the trees were as serried rows of breastplates, barring passage. Oaks of great girth shut out the varied nooks; the prowlers could only see dim bowery hiding-places, where anchoret owls harboured in secure retirement, and far recesses, with great charm of beauty and great depth of stillness. Those thickets had not been disturbed since light-footed maids, who of old did keep the deer, played hide-and-seek, and made merry in the coverts, frightening the mavis and culver from their nests, and chasing the ousel and the ruddock through the tangled brake.

"This is profoundly solemn, dear brothers," said Adam, pausing a moment, and turning round. "I had no idea there was any such place in this prosaic county. Great waste of land, though; pity it isn't built upon. Good place for a work-house! Forward again, please."

They went on as before. A night raven, perched on a grotesque bough, seemed to mock at their expedition, and Seth shook his ebony stick at it angrily. The sentinel poplars with their ghastly bloom formed a blue-dark background to the declivity. They made their way down to the bank of the water to find it a broad stream. Judging, if its course was followed, the lock would be reached in time, they stepped carefully on, cautious where they put their particular feet, and with a triumphant spring at the heel when thinking how close was the reward for all their enduring patience. Once a glowworm shone, and all three stopped as by one movement to stare at it, so like a corner gleam of dim old gold when seen by moonlight.

"Rout it out, Noah," said Adam, "and see if anything's behind. The light would almost seem reflected upon something."

Noah routed it out with his stick. There was shining of moonlight on the ebony, but no further gleam upon the earth. Adam pointed to the stream. "Watercress, I do believe! Noah, will you gather some for breakfast?"

"No, thank you," said Noah, drawing back. His aquatic prejudice was great, and all his economy not equal to the culling of cresses at midnight. He must modify his refusal, and said, "I hope to-morrow we shall be in a position to do better." Whereat the leader indulged in the Tomkins chuckle, and they stepped quicker over the herbage and stones. Sighing gales of autumn had swept down the valley, and laid the leaves thick upon the banks; thus their footsteps made little noise, but the boughs above made more, with the strange language natural to them, as though rustled by a crowd of spirits on their nightly flight.

The bleating of stray lambs stole on the ear, and these lamb-like gentlemen paused to listen, impressed by the peaceful reminder of the scene; affected they pressed each other's hands, and then went on again.

A bat flew full in the face of Mr Noah, much to that gentleman's disgust, his fierce flourish of his stick sent it off, and struck the incomparable hat of Seth into the bargain. That worthy thought it was a poacher, and he was about to take to his springy heels, when the mild apology of Noah explained matters, but could not restore the pristine beauty of the battered headpiece.

Then they went on again.

Those dense clumps of pine might have hidden whole hosts of assailants, but the Brothers Tomkins were so immovably wrapped up in the comprehensiveness of the Brothers Tomkins, unless foes became very palpable indeed they would neither recognise nor dread any such existence; though, to be sure, their isolation down there was anything but pleasant. The scarred boles and gnarled trunks seemed all on the broad grin; and the three grinned back. Those laugh that win, and had not they won?

Gusts shrilly moaned among the tree-tops. There was dreary splashing of rills bearing down to the stream; croaking of frogs gathered in weird forces; monotonous gurgling where meandering water circled some rushy shoal, or beat against the pediment of tiny islets; flapping of wings where the white-throated water-ousel rose startled to the alders; fleeing of hares to the bracken; dislodged fragments falling from the shaly strata; rattling of dry berries on the ash; and trickling of a distant sluice, the floodgate they were in search of, and each listened across the interspace with gloating satisfaction.

"Brother Noah," said Adam, turning back with the solemn manner characterising him when about to communicate something of depth, "This might well be called stealing a night march on the *weir*!" He crowed humorously; and it was so devilish funny they all three crowed together.

A weasel left its lair to run across their eerie path, and they followed its frolic affectionately. There was no Tomkins crest, but assuredly they would have selected a weasel thrice awake for that honourable emblem.

Suddenly all paused, motionless with astonishment.

They had arrived at the finale of their expedition, and were spell-bound to find a majestic figure posed near the ancient arch, like a great knight in armour.

It was Hugh Edred leaning on his crowbar to rest. Mighty as was his strength the labour before him was mightier. He had commenced to knock down the masonry of the built-up arch, and the breach disclosed dusky chests in line, some of great size, all probably of great weight.

Upon witnessing the ponderous contents of the hollow they made a rush towards him.

"Stand off!" shouted Edred, in a voice of thunder.

"Who are you?" they fiercely demanded.

"Son of the woman who for twenty-six years held the custody of this Treasure. I take possession now, in the name of its owners."

Resolutely as that woman had protected it for him he protected it for them, and confronted the sneaking cowering

fraternity with magnificent authority, standing midway between the brothers and the breach like a Colossus.

Big as he was, and though they saw the moonlight shine on the barrel of a weapon, they were three to one, were sinewy, and desperate, and they made a passionate attack on him.

He repulsed them with a grand contempt. "If I had a man here to take my place," he shouted, "I would drive you out like so many geese!"

"Well, Dobson is coming!" replied a lusty voice, which was followed by the appearance of that genial one; and the Tomkins' heels, which had gone up violently upon their being likened to geese, came down very flat indeed.

"At your service, sir," said Dobson, with his short professional bow.

"Stand here awhile, please; I'll be back shortly. Now clear off, you three!"

The Brothers linked their arms and beat a precipitate retreat, their humiliation far from improved by the hearty ring of Dobson's laughter, which they heard behind them. The Brothers preferred walking off to being driven, and receded as quickly as possible, Edred following, much impressed by the up-and-down celerity of their mode of retiring. Their white hats were seen in the moonlight, bobbing above the bushes in regular, if defeated order.

He returned to the faithful Dobson, who was indulging in a smoke and watching over the chests.

"You have rendered me a timely service, friend, for which I thank you." Dobson nodded with unaffected composure.

"Queer place this to stow away properties in," he said.

"I'll make further use of you in removing them, if you're willing——"

"Excuse my interrupting you, but I allus like to know what I'm doing a thing for."

Hugh Edred laughed. "Quite right. These chests hold valuables, removed by stealth years ago from the hall yonder. I purpose taking them back, now, for security, until the owners put in their claim."

"Well, that's straightfor'ards. Possibly you mean to Mr

Masheter's, a gentleman and a man of kindness. Putting one thing and another together, I wouldn't be surprised if it's the treasure-trove a young friend of mine named Tattergast is after?"

Dobson stood with his thumbs tucked in his waistcoat arm-holes, his coat flying back, his hat tipped up, and he looked profoundly knowing. But the giant shook his head; he had never heard that name. Dobson corrected himself: "Leastways his true name is Weir, which to my mind ain't half so imposing as the other."

"You're on the trail now," said Hugh. "But what has become of your friend is a great mystery."

Dobson laid down his pipe in real concern, and asked the other's meaning. Hugh explained, when the owner of the unrivalled Panorama looked very troubled. "It seems to me there has been some foul play at work," said he in a low voice.

"I believed at first that he had sailed for England, but circumstances make me agree with your view of it. Now let's to work."

"Ay, and with a will," cried Dobson, heartily. "Two of my men are up in the road with the van, and they're at your service for carrying these over," pointing to the bulky coffers, and sending a terrific shout across the glen for his man. "Do you mind telling me if Mr Tattergast was well, sir, and the better for the trip?" asked the old fellow, after a pause.

"Mr Tattergast, as you call him, has been very nearly taking his exit; a foretaste of the plot we are defeating."

Dobson doubled his fists. "I'd like to have 'em under the wheels of my van! Dobson's would roll it out of 'em, or I'd never take another benefit."

Dobson's man traced his master, and the three demolished sufficient of the wall to get at the interior. The chests were weighty, the progress with them up the banks of the defile was slow, but the robust vigour of Edred availed for such feats of strength. Dobson remembered seeing one of the farm carts up-ended in a field close by, so the other man was despatched with the old mare to fetch it; three of the five chests were



placed in the cart, and Dobson went on with them to the Squire's, the old mare dragging her burden with the leisure natural to her. Edred remained guarding the other two chests.

The Herongate was just blushing under the rose of dawn, and appeared more beautiful in the eyes of the showman than he had yet seen it; the Squire did not rise very early, but the servants were about, and Dobson explained his business, and asked permission to deposit his freightage on the lawn until Mr Masheter was stirring. Considerable was the curiosity aroused amongst them; and the pretty housemaid, who had always an active eye to her own interests, stole up-stairs, tapped softly at her master's door, and communicated the strange event.

Mr Masheter at once arose, and soon afterwards went down-stairs to look with his own eyes at the solid embodiment of that oft-discussed Treasure. Anxiously did he watch for the coming back of the cart, ordering that a substantial breakfast should be in readiness for those with it. He had the chests removed by Wilson and the gardener to his strong-room; and although matters were still enveloped in mystery, he naturally suspected the truth.

Not until nine o'clock was the rumbling of wheels heard, and the cart seen approaching. Walking with Dobson was a massively-built fellow who strode along with a species of rugged dignity and savage courtliness which impressed Mr Masheter instantly. He removed his broad felt hat when standing before the house, and gazed quickly at its proportions as though to learn if any part of it had been altered. Were it not for his heroic appearance, manly and opposed to any touch of softness, the Squire would have thought him moved by some powerful emotion. He approached the door, meeting the Squire bluffly, and said, "I am Hugh Edred."

"You are welcome, sir," Mr Masheter replied, with characteristic kindness; "this is familiar ground to you."

Edred bowed with rough politeness. "Thank you, yes." Then he explained briefly, "Some accident has happened to Weir in New York, and I came over to see to his inheritance. We are indebted to the friend vonder for his timely assistance."

The Squire walked over to Dobson, whom he greeted very pleasantly. "This visit reminds me of the last you paid me, Mr Dobson."

"I'm allus glad to help in making things square, sir," said Dobson, assisting to drag out a huge chest of primitive formation.

Mr Masheter turned to Edred, "You will probably communicate with Mr Weir in London concerning this transaction?"

"I called there on my arrival, and found *his* friends in trouble owing to the disappearance also of this Mr Weir. It was the conviction this double accident meant something serious which led me to proceed at once to the spot where the Treasure lay. And I was only just in time, for three of the craftiest-looking gentlemen I've seen either side the Atlantic came up to dispute it."

Mr Masheter heard of Saul Weir's situation with grave uneasiness.

"I am glad the Treasure is safe," he said. "The chests have been taken to my strong-room. They will not, of course, be touched until the Weirs are present."

"Their contents need not be removed, but I wish to see what the chests contain."

Mr Masheter, who possessed his full share of curiosity over this singular affair, merely bowed. He felt even yet sceptical as to whether they held anything of value. Considerable property had been from time to time disinterred he knew, but there had also existed many a disappointment.

"I hold the keys," Hugh Edred explained. "My mother had them for many years in an iron case she jealously guarded. When I acquainted Mr Weir with the information he sought, I reserved the keys until receiving corroborative assurance of the veracity of the claim."

"Very proper. But come in to breakfast, and then if it is your pleasure to do so, you can pursue the investigation."

The two chests were placed with the others, and they entered the breakfast-room.

Edred's quick eyes took in every feature of the interior;

he experienced a sense of tenderness unknown for years upon thus coming back to the scenes of his boyhood.

"You have not yet told me where you succeeded in finding the Treasure?" asked Mr Masheter.

Edred explained, at which the Squire shuddered.

"The place is more painful to me than any upon earth," he said, with tremulous emotion. "I have not been through it for twenty years."

Both Dobson and Edred looked up with surprise.

"It was there my dear daughter met with the accident which ruined her health; the bridle-paths were intricate, the ground rough, and she was thrown from her pony while but a child. Since then the spot has been distasteful to us despite its natural beauty. It is owing to that the hoard has rested so long undiscovered, for I should most certainly have had the watergate put in repair."

"It was my favourite resort as a boy," said Hugh. "I would take thither my books of travel and spend the whole day in its wild seclusion."

"It struck *me* it would come in well for my Banks of the Rhine," said Dobson, with his mouth full; he was enjoying himself amazingly.

"I am even now in the dark as to how Mr Dobson is mixed up in this," said Mr Masheter, with a puzzled look.

"Well, you see, sir," Dobson proceeded, "I was on my way to open the show at Ipswich, as my posters may have informed you. Passing a wood last night at about eleven forty-five, I saw those three brothers whose resemblance of feature and meanness are the only things remarkable about them. There was a more than usually cunning air pervading them which greatly excited my suspicion, and I followed them down to the place we've been talking about——"

"Just in the nick of time to act as sentinel while I routed the enemy;" finished Hugh, laughing.

"Very extraordinary," said Mr Masheter; "why, they are people of respectability and substance!"

"That's just it," said Dobson; "you wouldn't find a really poor person engaging in such extravagantly dirty work; it's

those with money, who hope by a daring stroke to treble it, as allus speculates so much;—at least that is my knowledge of the world.”

“You will be a philosopher, Mr Dobson, to the end of the——”

“Show, sir? Yes; I’ve seen a good deal of the world unwind, and the worst operations where the most money is. But I must be going, and thank you. I’ve a lot of business on hand.”

“Won’t you stay to see what all the trouble you have taken has been about?”

“No, thank you; I might want some of it,” answered he, with a twinkling eye. Then seriously, “I would rather see my friend Tattergast back, safe and sound, than any of it.”

“I hope your wish may very soon be realised, I am sure.”

Dobson, with rough and ready good-nature, bade Edred good-bye, and joined his men, who had been entertained elsewhere. Nor had the faithful old horse been forgotten by the kind-hearted Squire.

“Shall I be taking too great a liberty if I ask you to let me walk through the old rooms?” asked Hugh.

“Certainly not; pray act without restraint. I will leave you to go alone, while I write a letter.”

Edred appreciated this thoughtfulness, and while Mr Masheter adjourned to his study, he proceeded to the stairs.

His strong tread was heard to be slow and soft upon nearing a certain unoccupied room that of old had belonged to Mrs Edred.

The furniture had scarcely been altered: the dusky aspect, the faded fabrics and old-fashioned articles, were keen reminders of the past. How often he had pictured this little room in the solitude of his Western cottage! He remembered the various things scattered about as having been used by his mother,—and this strong one trembled with softness of feeling that shook him to the soul. All the wild, rough life from that time flashed upon him—all the spoiled splendour of a day-dream that might have been. “Oh that my birth had been

like to another's," he moaned; "to have remained her comfort, to have saved that awful tragedy!"

He opened a drawer he remembered well—she had been wont to keep his letters there; a sheet of old newspaper covered the bottom, never touched since she cleared the drawer upon leaving: he removed it, and found a little piece of paper with faint pencil-marks in her writing. He held it near the window, and read—

*If he will not come to me, I must go to him. I hunger
to see my darling again.*

How many years she had suffered with that intensity of her longing—had brooded over that one idea of going to him—had preserved her costly secret for his benefit!

He raised the paper to his lips passionately, then placed it away with reverence in his pocket-book.

He went out with a bowed head, closing the door of the room softly.

Shaking off the depression, he drew himself erect with the dignity natural to him, and went down to Mr Masheter, who was ready to accompany him upon their important research.

They proceeded at once to the strong-room, and the Squire bolted the door.

With the gravity befitting a magistrate, Mr Masheter pre-faced any examination by laying down the law.

"After all said and done, the Treasure is not the property of the Weirs; it is ceded to the Crown. The Weirs can only claim the addition made to it by their own ancestors."

"I beg your pardon!" answered Edred, respectfully. "For services rendered the Crown by Saul Weir, of the South Sea Directorate, the Treasure was, by specific enactment, granted unto him and his heirs without challenge."

"You have the authoritative documents confirming this?"

"I had. They are now in the hands of Mr Saul Weir?"

CHAPTER XXII.

TREASURE-TROVE.

COBHAM MASHETER, who was of an impressionable, excitable nature, trembled with agitation, while the cool, collected miner produced his keys.

They were unwieldy instruments of quaint construction: one large enough to lock up a barn; one with a rough, unshapely handle; another with tremendous wards of rusty iron.

They tackled the smallest case first: it looked the oldest; certainly its key was the ugliest the Squire had ever seen.

It would have taxed the strength of a Titan blacksmith to turn the corroded lock; but the right man in the right place was there, and he raised the creaking lid without apparent effort.

They leaned over it, looking down on the contents. It was crowded with antique articles, and Edred bundled them out forthwith.

Pieces of early English silver; clay bottles stuck with angles of unfashioned gold; a silver shield depicting chariot-races; fillets, bandelets, and laurel wreaths in gold; bronze vessels and weapons; a silver battle-axe, and silver javelin-heads; Saxon sceattæ, with rude unintelligible devices; crowns of Heptarchic kings; lumps of pale yellow gold; wreaths of mistletoe in dull gold; arrow-heads of gold; and a chariot-harness of the same precious metal.

As this extraordinary collection lay scattered before them, those engaged in the examination were overcome by a fascination they could not control.

"They were not so far out who predicted something would come of all the expectation," muttered Edred to himself, calculatingly.

His companion was too overwhelmed by surprise to reply. With riveted attention he watched Edred unlock and lift the cover of another chest, then could no longer restrain an exclamation of wonder, so magnificent was that weight of splendour. A glittering mass of gems and dazzling plates of gold.

"If you don't mind, I must really call my daughter. She ought to see this."

The Squire hurried to the door, and called Miss Masheter, who soon came in answer to the summons.

"This is Mr Edred, my love, and—this is the Treasure!" The Squire scanned her face at this thunderbolt,—even his calm, unworldly Mary must be startled. If so she was very quiet over it, smiling upon her father in his comical state of bewilderment, and bowing to the stranger with her usual grace. And each of those two thought how composed and self-possessed the other appeared.

"Better put this lot back before we take the others out," said Hugh, in a matter-of-fact sort of way, replacing the contents of the first chest.

Those of the next were removed with more care, because the antiques and rarities were of higher value.

Bowls, etins, and masks of gold; cups and covers of silver; head ornaments gleaming with gems, and a stomacher blazing with flashes of colour; tiaras formed of fine old brilliants; gold ornaments with antique and cinque-cento intaglio; buttons, seals, plaques, medals, medallions, and lamps,—all in the precious metals; cups in jade and crystal; gold scent-bottles set with diamonds; and a quantity of loose sapphires, turquoises, and jaspers—the wealth of a regalia.

Handling the inestimable relics with excitable interest, Mr Masheter remarked: "These are fine old heirlooms; I should not mind being the owner. How I wish those young men were here!"

"We will attend to that matter later on," replied Edred,

quietly replacing the valuables. "Do you care to see any more?" he asked.

"To be sure I do. That lock at the end seems to have had something to do with the church; it is quite ecclesiastic in its design."

Edred opened that one next. Perhaps its contents were more striking than any. There reposed the ciborium and monstrance in massy gold, together with the costly valuables of many a shrine. There also were golden font-covers and ewers, alms-dishes, coronæ, tazzas, ostensoirs, missal-cases, triptychs, censers, flagons, patins, and oratory vases. Below these they found, placed with great care, a richly carved crozier-head, a lapis-lazuli crucifix, abbots' and bishops' mitres, paschal candlesticks, sanctuary lamps, a small holy-water vat, and a hama; also a number of ancient and mediæval silver vessels; and a curious gold pine-apple containing figures of the Nativity; some richly chased benediction-lights; and, shaken below the reliquaries, Roman coins, crowns, julios, and bajoches.

"You must certainly stay to guard all this," said Mr Masheter with concern; "I do not like having so enormous a charge." Then, remembering his position as a magistrate: "Or I can have a couple of constables, until it is taken away."

"Yes," said Edred, thoughtfully; "you will be prudent to do so. We have daring and desperate people to deal with."

"I can only say it is worthy of all the stir that has been made about it," remarked Mr Masheter.

"Perhaps it would impress me more if I had had a little less to do with one of the precious metals. I am glad to wash my hands of it all."

"Well, don't do that until you've shown us the end of it," said the Squire, laughing.

With the same grave demeanour Edred unlocked the next of the chests. A more varied and curious array was displayed, and Miss Masheter came a step or two forward to gaze upon a feast of art in its rarer, richer sense.

Ivory carving and carved sardonyx; gold mortuary

diadems; cloisonné and Champlevé enamels; cameos and intaglios; silver lock escutcheons; a clavichord and spinet, both richly decorated; basket-woven gold; silver plates of Charles the Second's day; delicate Queen Anne candlesticks; gold snuff-boxes; a carved ivory tankard; gold of fine granulated work; two highly chased armorial shields; enamelled watches and snuff-boxes; and, in a large steel-coffer, unset rose-diamonds, sun-opals, and emeralds.

Riches so grew upon them they gazed with astonished weariness, yet were eager to see each fresh revelation.

"To my mind," said Mr Masheter, "the main interest attaching to them is not alone that they are historical records, but that they should have survived so many changes so long a time;—brought down to this our day, an incalculable treasure, destined now perchance to do more harm or good in the world than ever before."

Edred restored the valuables to their long resting-place, and having shut down the lid he sat thereon to rest.

Each wondered what solid, tangible marvels the remaining receptacle might hold.

There was a sort of delightful suspense about it; not knowing what was to come, and with possibly unimaginable riches in abeyance; but that giant couched on the tomb of untold wealth was a great deal too slow for Mr Masheter, who observed that he would like to see what it contained.

"You are as bad as any of them, papa," Miss Masheter chided, while smiling fondly upon him.

Thus called to order, the Squire pleaded the truth. "I confess to not being so tranquilly constituted as yourself and Mr Edred, my dear. If I had been chief warder I should have been to the bottom long ago."

Edred gave a good-tempered nod, came off his iron pedestal in rather a stately manner, knelt on a strong knee patiently, and at last compelled the premier obstinate lock to yield; and as it was the largest repository so it was the most magnificent collection. Barbarian urns and ewers lay thick, with antique chalices and goblets; royal cups and salvers, ornaments, and the insignia of many a regal era; huge bars of dead, lustre-

less gold, an unchased witness of the cradle of history; grotesque vessels of fabulous weight in precious metal, flooded with light they had not reflected for hundreds of years, wedged in with ancient goldsmith's work of chaste and rare designs. The pieces were taken out separately and examined with startled interest.

Hunting-horns, glaive-heads, sack-pots, tinder-boxes, incense-chariots, pitchers and vases, tripods, lock-plates, lanterns, wine-coolers, and salt-cellars, all of massive gold, and many of them exquisitely engraved; venison dishes, loving cups, old English peg-tankards, a couteau-de-chasse, and royal gauntlets; there were poinards of gold and ivory; gold mounts off sticks, staves, and maces; gold buckles off bandolier-straps; the gold umbo of a shield; darts set with rubies; an ivory sceptre; and the gold pommel of a side-saddle. The silver articles, if not of equal costliness, were of equal interest, and comprised repoussé work, plates of the 14th century, standing cups, armlets, knives, goblets, and girdles. There were candlesticks of gilt bronze covered with pierced foliage; mythological-decorative drinking-vessels; a steel bascinet with studs of gold; a helmet of steel and gold; fans with gold handles set with precious stones; gown-studs of precious stones; and some rough ingots of silver; gentlemen's gold chains of the time of Elizabeth, entangled around the beaded torcs of a far older period; amulets fallen harmlessly by ancient hook-daggers; necklaces and ear-pendants with lace-pins in old red gold; pink coral brooches with flaring carbuncles and cornelians; and, as though to splash the whole with colour, there was many an amethyst, chrysolite, onyx, and ruby; scattered with these were old gold beads, and such a jumble of coins of various realms as was well in character with the heterogeneous assortment enumerated—rose-nobles, great sovereigns, angels, pistoles, spade guineas, talents, shekels, double crowns, Britain crowns, ducats, schillings, mancuses, and others.

When they had come to an end of making an inspection of this great treasure it was natural there should be calculation as to its worth. No approximate estimate could by any possi-

bility be formed. That its value arrived at several millions sterling was undoubted, the solid value being greatly increased by the antiquity, fine workmanship, and rare design of many of the pieces. While being the most sumptuous treasure ever discovered in Great Britain or her dependencies, it was also one of the most interesting from an archæological point of view. Modern wealth seemed to sink into insignificant proportions before such massive witnesses of a gorgeous past. One stood before the relics impressed not more by their rugged splendour than by their hoary age. Time had given of his best, and the old land had well shrouded the marvellous secret. It appeared in fitting sequence that such a man as Hugh Edred, who truly seemed of another race, should have revealed these wonders.

But there was more to do. And he was a brusque man, swift upon his deeds, unerring at his mark. He said unceremoniously, "I must leave you, now, for London : to find Saul Weir."

The Squire shrugged his shoulders at the bluntness, but felt glad no time was to be lost. He penned a line to the superintendent of police at Ipswich, and was about to give orders for the horse to be put in the dog-cart for Edred, when the latter thanked him, briefly said he preferred to walk, and took leave, bowing to Miss Masheter with an unpolished politeness that was none the less genuine.

Having executed the commission in Ipswich, he went on by the first train that offered, and reached the house of Saul Weir early in the evening. He found the children, whom he had before seen, indescribably grief-stricken by their new trouble. They brightened up a little when the stalwart, rough-speaking stranger made himself at home with their sorrow, and proceeded to pick up the clues bit by bit.

"Now, sir, just tell me the ins and outs of this going away of your friend. As I understood you yesterday, when Mr Weir and the young lady here came off their journey, you handed him a telegram from New York, and an order. Did he leave either in the house?"

"Mr Weir placed the telegram in his desk, the order he put in his pocket as he is accustomed to do."

"Yes. Now, where did you stand while he read them?"

"At his knee, I brought them to him and waited."

"This was a fortnight ago," said Edred, musing. Then addressing Penryllon: "Boys' eyes are quick—what did you see, without reading or looking over the order, can you remember?"

"I noticed that it was in the form of a memorandum."

"Yes."

"I saw the word 'Nephews.'"

"Nephews!" repeated Edred, weightily. "What else?"

Arthur reflected. "I recollect the word 'Menagerie.'"

"Anything else?"

The boy again taxed his memory. "No, sir; nothing else."

"Very good. Well—you don't give me much ground to stand upon. Men like me want a more substantial basis than that; but I'll do what I can. And as for you, pretty humming-bird (to Daisy), do not cry those sparkling eyes away, but look out instead for our return, and prepare us a rare good supper, I have not had one in England for thirty years."

His courageous words cheered them, and when he went out he had the gratification of seeing a smile displace the tear.

"The shreds are slight to pull by," muttered Hugh, striding into a public-house, and asking to see a Trades Directory.

He turned to *MENAGERIE*, and under this heading were four names, one of these was "*Cubwhelp Nephews*," who were described as Dealers in fittings for Menageries, Travelling Shows, &c.

"I'll try it," said he to himself, shortly, noting the address.

He paid for some whisky he had ordered, and stepped out quickly, an imposing policeman at the corner hiding his diminished head.

Hugh strode along with a mighty vigour in the direction of Shadwell, saying to himself: "You saved *her* life, my man; and, by Heaven's help, I'll save yours!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TWO WORKMEN.

LION or man, or both, Saul had been true to his determination not to reveal his secret. It was a trait of his nature never to depart from a resolution.

Probably he would have fared worse, but that they had nothing to gain by his death—everything by his being compelled to relinquish his advantage.

They doled him enough food to support life. There were intervals of malicious neglect, to give him a taste of starvation; they thought it would force him into yielding. When they saw that he continued as firm they changed their tactics, set dainties, plausibly sought to coerce him into submission.

If there was exceptional ferocity about the gang, their victim was endowed with exceptional fortitude. It was a game in which they would never win, whatever he might lose; nay, though he lost his life!

From the first Saul realized the presence of imminent danger; he had fallen but too effectually into the artful snare; and when he felt strength growing weaker, and his power becoming prostrate, he experienced a certain measure of dejection, which was natural and human.

Through the bars they gave him some straw whereon to sleep, and, like a martyr of old, he made his bed in a lion's den.

Next to the loss of liberty, and repugnance at this dastardly outrage, the main feeling animating him was solicitude concerning Daisy. He knew how intense would be her sorrow, the more so as she must feel wholly unable to act in his behalf. Little was this blow anticipated when he alluded to her

last trouble during the conversation with Mlle. Bernardin: earnestly he hoped she would look in frequently during this fresh calamity. "I never wanted a friend more than at this moment," thought Saul.

On the third night he was resting sleeplessly on the straw, his gaze bent upon a light shining at a neighbouring window, trying to look up with simple hope, and his own unalterable, unshaken faith; trying to forget the den, the straw, the earthen pitcher of water. At that time, in the dead of the night, he heard the rustle of a woman's apparel; no footsteps, only that soft rustle of garments. He remained perfectly still; it was quite dark; he could not tell where the woman stood, but he judged before the cage. His heart beat painfully. What new barbarity was to be practised? He heard a sigh, surely his ears must deceive him; he listened with acuteness, heard it again, and his name sweetly breathed. Oh the indescribable delicacy and gentleness of that faint utterance of his name! Again, a little louder, though barely above a whisper. He was far too practical to attribute it to the supernatural; this must be some merciful deliverance; a tender-hearted woman come, as they always came, to the succour of the afflicted. He started, stood up, stepped forward, "Who ever you are release me from this place!" he implored, in a thrilling tone.

"Alas! I cannot," she murmured; "I am in the power of the villains who entrapped yourself; like you, I am a prisoner. Give me your hand that I may clasp it; we are united in suffering!"

She put two soft, warm hands through the bars and pressed his with pathetic anguish.

"If you but knew my history," she murmured, as though in pain, "the ill-usage I have undergone, you would give me your sympathy although you cannot give me your help."

The smothered pathos, heartbroken and tremulous, touched him; he did indeed feel for her. "Alas, no! I cannot help you; unless, that is, you can first help me."

"What shall I do?" she eagerly asked. "To raise these bars is impossible; I am a close prisoner, and cannot call

assistance ; my strength is unequal to opposing the associates of this horrible crime."

"No," he said, sadly, "you cannot help me ; poor woman ! You need help yourself. And if I were free that you should have !"

"One way occurs to me," she said, with hesitation ; "tell them all they wish to know. While they are away I will raise an alarm that must bring help. Then you can follow—secure their arrest—and inflict just punishment. If you will not adopt this course for your own sake, do so for mine, who now plead to you for deliverance." This powerful entreaty was broken by passionate sobs.

"No !" said he, disdainfully ; "not even for you, Jezebel !" falling back with an exclamation of loathing, and remaining silent upon the straw.

Her scream of discordant laughter rang through the place until the old cages shook and rattled.

Laugh on, sleek hypocrite. The athlete lives : and while he lives he works.

His supreme disgust led him to think of that little leather case he always carried about with him.

He waited some time, then took a file of exquisite temper and commenced upon the bars ; working with slow, cautious patience ; the instrument eating its way gradually into the iron. Filing the bars inwards that the dents might not be suspected, continuing it hour by hour ; desisting with the dawn.

All that day he preserved a moodiness ; they considered him conquered. At night he waited hours, until it was probably certain he would pursue his work unheard. Then he made progress ; the bars he was cutting through were severed sufficient for his liberation after another night's diligence. His strenuous perseverance had accomplished this more speedily than he had dared to think possible : he took courage, his good heart cheered by the result. If detected there would yet be a fight for liberty : he had fallen upon such a nettle-bank of blasted consciences he determined he would mow down the lot if they stood in his way.

Day came, and passed on drearily as the others ; a dark day

out of doors, finishing with an early twilight. By that window through which he had seen the light, he saw a roof with serried rows of slates shining in the rain ; pigeons blending with the colour ; smoke beaten down by wet cold wind from a grey chimney-stack shadowy against the leaden sky. Thus much, and below it, a bedroom agleam with rosy light ; at the friendly window that had comforted him before was a pretty child undressing a doll ; beside her, a cage of doves asleep.

The pleasant contrast sided with his hope. There was a cheerful room and a pretty child also waiting for him ; he hoped soon to be back with her.

And he thought, "Beneficial are contrasts, which break in upon trouble and colour the greyiness of life."

There might be a rosy contrast pending to this grim strait.

He was eager for action ; the long trail of hours had not been as irksome before.

During the time of his being there they had kept the shop closed. He could not tell what iron might yet have to be forced.

At about the same hour he recommenced, and worked amain.

Hour by hour the slow progress was proceeding, and as calculated sufficient was done to yield to a sturdy wrench.

The time had come. He was ready, nerved with brave boldness. He breathed quick, pantingly,—a grasp on the bars ; they shook, bent, broke short ; two remained in his hands. He repeated on the others with the same result. He stepped from the den, and felt more of a man in stature : he knew his strength on fair ground.

Saul groped around for his basket, or any instrument that might be of use, and feeling nothing caught up an iron bar, then tried to find the opening to the shop.

He felt his way gradually, careful not to brush down any of the articles. The darkness was intense, but his recollection of the plan of the interior served him, and he found his way to the shop. This was so long and narrow still greater caution was required. His outstretched hand encountering the bars and corners of cages, he shuddered, and tried to go quicker past. Suddenly there was a sound—he stopped to listen.

Nothing had been displaced or moved: it was the motion of some animal, shaking itself after sleeping. Ahead he saw the glare of eyes, fierce, ferocious—those of some beast of prey. No bloodhound would glare with such an awful hunger. Then followed a low, suppressed roar, as though the creature would not alarm its prey.

Although the beast was chained they had prevented escape more effectually than by many bars.

Thus discomforted, he retraced his way with similar care; there was no alternative but to attempt departure by the house.

He found a door, that through which they had come to torture him. Within was a room; his feet trod upon carpet, his hand touched a table. All was dark, all was uncertain; he groped for the door, and found it,—that must be the way into the house: but there was a barrier—an iron bedstead was drawn across, whereon lay a human form. Thus again face to face with difficulty, Saul tried to discover a window. If there was one it must be high above his reach. He felt satisfied the only method of leaving was by that door. A cleverer artisan than Saul Weir could not have hoped to draw away an iron bedstead without awaking the sleeper. He was prepared for the inevitable scuffle, and stooped to the bedstead, then started—the form which had been there was no longer upon it.

He pulled away the bedstead—was probably allowed so to do, to fix the attack: as he stood with his hand on the door, a terrific blow, struck with exactness, laid him insensible.

“There’s a person named Eli Jebeson a wonder for bringing his man down; and if there’s a better marksman I’d like to see him.”

The speaker procured a light, and looked to see that his man was quieted. Truly it appeared so, and he walked off, first to examine the cage, next to summon Crick.

There was a huge iron staple and chain in the outer place by which some wild beast had once been secured, they dragged Saul Weir to it, and fastened him so strongly there was no further fear of his escape. They removed the leather case which had proved of such good service, and leaving him on some straw went their way.

In the morning Mrs Steele came to him with a cup of tea; she found him in great pain.

"I am sorry you have felt the weight of that man's hand," said she, in a tone of sympathy.

Saul looked up quickly, to detect if the tone was genuine; he believed so, felt glad of the tea, and drank it off thankfully.

"I don't want to see you kept here any longer," she said; "and I have a proposal to make."

He had heard enough of her proposals, and turned his head wearily.

"It is this," she proceeded: "in my heart I detest the gang as much as you do, and that man more than any of them. In my heart I respect yourself, although I respect money more; now, if you pledge me your word to hand me a liberal portion, I will set you free, and accompany you to where the Treasure is to be found."

"Not one gold piece!" cried he, his spirit rising at the treachery to her associates in spite of their barbarous usage of himself.

"All right," she answered, coolly; "I'll wait, and take my share with the others."

"Never by my lips," and he closed them fast. She would gather no more from him, and walked away abruptly. The man was vexatious to her; she could not understand his nature—what to him represented principle to her presented stubbornness.

They treated him badly after that, and Saul Weir began, not to despair, but to evolve further means of escape.

In those tedious days which followed, he had ample time to think out his knowledge of mechanics, statics, and the relations of force. He kept a fascinated gaze on the iron staple, working in his mind a plan for removing it. A man like this was a doubtful one to incarcerate; his knowledge of science was a weapon of itself. One day, soon after darkness set in, he laid a grasp on the iron; it was of tenacious fixing, as was requisite for the purpose it had been used for. Cemented into the solid flag, no exercise of strength would serve to loosen it; his skill warned him that a more gradual, even, and certain

method must be adopted. There was no limit to his patience, nor his hope: without lever, axle, pulley, inclined plane, wedge, or screw, he believed he would raise that iron stake, if not the slab, and set himself free.

Thought Saul, "Will not slow motion of the hand loosen this by degrees, as certainly as rock worn away by water? I think so." And he acted on the thought.

Never did courage animate to a more arduous undertaking, one more trying to the patience, or one more fatiguing in its operation.

It was no vulgar criminal imprisoned for larceny, seeking to effect an escape to perpetrate further misdeeds, but an aggrieved, basely injured man, determined upon freeing himself; not to be revenged, nor to clutch great wealth, but to breathe the sweet air once more, to do his good work again, to kiss his fond child at home.

When he desisted at dawn the staple was as fast as before. Did this discourage him? No; he knew the theory of what he was doing too well. It would be as hard and fast on the dawn to come, and on the dawn following that; yet all the time, infinitesimally, there would be imperceptible preparation for the destruction of its hold.

While this went on the mind was not idle; he felt it well to exercise that for a safety-valve. All through the grim, grotesque passion-play, Life, his mind had kept pace with his hand; but he had a purpose now in turning it to its best, for he had stood in front of a solemn opposite—his Soul; stark, livid, sombre, girt about with a sullen cloud, a dark star where the brow would be, density where the heart, and it seemed the incarnation of Despair. He thrust the horrid thing aside, set to work manfully, and was troubled no more.

His mind was searchingly exercised—as usual for the benefit of another. He spent this trial time, this period of slow labour, upon furthering his speculations in the alleviation of pain; still occupied in devising relief for Mary Masheter, whose malady appealed to his sympathy strongly, and whose resignation touched his tenderest interest.

Of old time, men carried a sword by their side, and their heart upon their sleeve; now it is a white feather and a fox's brush, with bulging coffers. This steady, working man belonged to the age of Chivalry. After several nights of work, his shortened efforts brought to bear on that rigid iron moved it slightly, and what a thrill crossed his heart at the success. Once unrooted, it would yield to the continuous fretting. With every half-hour it was rendered less secure; and at last he felt it shaken, turned, and a vigorous twist severed it from the stone. Then he stood up, with a sigh of intense relief, and an earnest prayer for as good fortune in the task before him—brave and heroic, despite the heavy drag of the chain. He glanced swiftly up to his window, as he called it in thought, for encouragement. A light was there as usual. A light at a window may be as helpful as a smile upon a face.

It was early, almost too early to begin the attempt; yet even in this there was advantage, as he might have to appeal to the passers-by. This happened upon the evening when Hugh Edred set out to rescue him, if it were not too late. Fastening the chain round his waist that it should not clank and trail, Saul contemplated one of two courses: to pile the cages and effect an escape by the roof above there where he could see that light, or to proceed along the tops of the cages which lined either side of the long shop; thus he hoped avoiding the savage brute there chained. He decided upon the latter. Cautiously did he clamber the tiers, which, reaching to the low ceiling, barely admitted of his crawling along their summit. When midway he heard the smothered roar of the creature, the sudden pull on its chain, and he felt for the moment a sense of instant peril. The fierce spring and jerk of the iron, while it made the futile attack, caused him to turn cold. It was level with him, below, and its angry wildness seemed to shake the shop. But he heard another sound equally as alarming—the beast had aroused its masters. Saul heard one go blundering to the staple, then an oath followed on finding their victim at liberty. Saul, with awful hurry, crept on, and descended at the door, which he unbarred in a moment, and tried to open but had no means of unlocking it.

The men were rushing down the shop. One stopped to pacify the brute. Saul tried to wrench the bar from the door for use as a weapon, but did not succeed—moreover, they were upon him. Behind came the woman with a light—it enabled Saul to see his assailants. The result of the first spar was a serious rebuff: the burly Jebeson offered great trouble, and when Wattle came to his confederate's assistance the day went against Saul Weir.

He gave a lusty shout for the intervention of outsiders, it was answered by a heartier one, and the door was suddenly forced open by a man of might, who at a stride stood by him in defence. The ruffians recoiled,—this new-comer dwarfed the brawny Jebeson.

"Just in time," he said, curtly, grasping Eli by the collar, holding him firm, regardless of kicking and plunging.

Weir, thus aided, recovered his standing, and made good his hold of the agile Mr Crick.

Wattle had shuffled off, to fall into worse hands. Police were waiting at the house-door by Edred's direction, and they secured both the stout person and Mrs Steele.

"You've been wanted a pretty good time, you have!" said one of the officers.

The police compelled Jebeson to remove the chain from Saul, and then the four were handcuffed and marched to the station-house amidst the enthusiasm of Shadwell.

"This help is opportune," said Saul Weir, gratefully.

"Glad to have been in time. Your absence has caused anxiety." He presented himself with a simplicity which had meant much in the West. "I am Hugh Edred."

"What!" cried Saul, in most genuine astonishment, "*her* son?"

"Ay, my lad, *her* son. God bless you for your goodness to her. I've heard much of Saul Weir, and am proud to take his hand." He shook that of Saul with magnificent warmth. "Don't stop longer in this place; the police have it all in hand. Your people are preparing supper, and I promised to be there. Come along, forget your hardships for to-night at least!"

Mr Weir stepped out of the shop into perplexity; he could

not understand events. He accompanied his towering champion rapidly towards Islington. Edred never rode, no matter the distance, and Weir was glad to stretch his legs. How delightful the old city looked, late though the hour was! Chest expanded, cheeks glowing, eyes gleaming, Saul was gloriously enjoying his liberty, revelling in a return to activity. And the other, workman also, noticed it with sympathy. *He* knew the strain of healthful exercise upon every muscle, life's splendid throb in every vein. Walking home, Hugh communicated the entire history, and Saul Weir shared keenly in his anxiety about Merry. The removal of the Treasure, which Hugh described with his usual crisp summary of details, interested Saul; and, as he realized that wealth to an enormous extent was certainly his to dispense at will, he felt profound gratitude to Providence for thus ordaining the conduct of events. The knowledge of his wealth did not alter his nature—on the contrary, he thought of all the good to be done with it.

Anxiously the girl and boy waited at the home looking out for them, and beaming faces greeted them when they were seen.

Saul took Daisy up in his arms and gave her a joyful kiss.

Edred remarking Arthur looking up impressed at his size, said with rough pleasantry, "I've got a better boy than you in America, one Herrick, a particular friend of mine."

"Much better," answered Penryllon readily, with amiability which pleased the other.

"If I know him, he will not rest till he finds out what has become of the other Mr Weir."

"It is an adventure he would like, independent of affection for his friend."

"Right you are, my lad, he's a brave one; and I left him plenty of money to prosecute the search with."

Very tender were Saul Weir's feelings on returning to his dear little home; it seemed filled with luxury and comfort to him, with all that a heart might desire. He had been mercifully delivered from an inhuman death. The hand of Noeba's son was the instrument selected after all to effect it. He re-

called her words, her grateful look, that day at Liverpool. Truly things seem to move in majestic order, with all our little carping at events and large failure to understand them.

These workmen made progress in understanding one another, in recognising each other's worth, in detecting the open candour and bluff honesty of each other's nature. It is not often two such men cross paths, or if they do, that they agree. These men became friendly. Saul Weir was a genuine and noble Christian; Hugh Edred was a confirmed hater of humbug,—thus they sided. Edred liked this man better than his namesake in America, because of the uncompromising thoroughness. If self-chosen outcastism made Hugh a fellow-Ishmael of the one, his superb *physique* and religion of work made him fellow-toiler with the other. And there was difference—one of these Weirs gave life to his mother, and sent her on her way with wealth; the other troubled to follow to take that wealth away. Edred liked wealth—went out to make it, but it must be wealth that he had worked for; he cared nothing for accidental treasure, but did care a great deal for an attempt to wrong his mother. It was Merry's nicety in representing Saul's disinterestedness that knit the soul of Goliath to that of Saul.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PRINCE AND THE MILLER.

JESSIE experienced a wondrous change of life in her new home. The courtliness of the Prince Sebastian, the most loving condescension on the part of his royal mother, and the gentle friendship of the amiable Mrs Pomfret, quite altered the tenor of her existence. There was no more sadness, no further yearning for freedom from care, no longer unhappiness of any sort. The dream of her life was realized in all full completeness, and she felt a wish to grow old in such exquisite service. Paid only in love, yet that atmosphere lifted her soul above servitude and its acknowledgment.

Taken to the heart as well as to the home of the Princess, Jessie felt that lofty pleasure appropriation by a noble heart always affords. She returned this affection, not with mere gratitude, but by an intensity of love of the most exalted type. She could never, of course, lose sight of the infinite majesty of her friend, nor approach as near to her as might have been possible with a lady of ordinary grade; but this very feeling lent an adoring timidity to the admiring tenderness, and it was beautiful rivalry.

The Princess did not press her religion or any custom of her country upon the girl or upon Mrs Pomfret; it was not in her nature to do so. The breadth, liberality, and enlightenment of her Highness discountenanced such a step; it was the higher latitude which had rendered her reign impuissant in the eyes of her people. Even on the walls the everlasting views of Plaza de Toros and portraits of Pepe Illo were well absent; no prize *toros de puntas*, or *toros de muerte*; no pica-

dor, banderillero, espada, or any lidiadores, made the Hermitage hideous. Sketches by the royal hand, pictures of Spain by John Phillip, and the portrait of a haughty ancestor of their house by Velasquez ; these were all.

As Jessie by degrees settled down in the household, unembarrassed and happy, the finer aspect of her nature became learnt ; its simplicity and modesty extended the interest felt in her ; and Prince Sebastian in particular dwelt in his intervals of musing upon her graces of character. Vivacious and impressionable, the Prince felt warmly disposed towards his mother's new charge, and his pleasure almost equalled that of the Princess at Jessie's coming. It brightened their dulness, and improved upon their retirement in every way. For lack of better divertisement the Prince *had* formed a prepossession, and he was exercised to know which of these admired ones bore off the palm.

A retired walk by the river through Meadowford meads led past an old water-mill. All about it the sedges were high, the trees luxuriant, and its romantic and picturesque appearance wooed many a quiet lover of nature to the walk. Some came for other reason than the walk, to obtain a glimpse of Kate, daughter of the miller. The mill was held in esteem at Meadowford ; the miller was thought well of, for his money, and for his daughter. Kate's attractiveness was sufficiently noticeable to render the path by the mill a pleasanter walk than that leading past the Retreat, Lady Emily Fuller's sylvan home ; at least in the opinion of those hoping to obtain a glimpse of the pretty water-spirit.

In pleasant spring and summer she had a custom of sitting down by the water, and to startle the fresh young face, unexpectedly discovered amidst the bulrushes and forget-me-nots, caused the finder as much confusion as she herself experienced ; but that upward, embarrassed, half-frightened look, left an indelible impression which somehow the stranger ever afterwards associated with flowing water, broad lilies set in crystal, blue flowers lovely as the uplifted eyes.

It was a large, comfortable old house, shaded by Scotch firs that grew in the most delightful old garden in Meadowford.

A large yard and granary, out-buildings, storehouses for grain, a cart-shed, chaise-house and stable, and an inner yard, nearer to the back of the house, where fowls, under the personal superintendence of Kate, proved a profitable source of improving her pin-money; if that term may be used of so neatly-dressed and unassuming a girl.

Young men of Meadowford found the walk vastly pleasant on those long evenings; but at such times Kate was never at her favourite spot: it was only when she believed no stranger would pass that way, when the place seemed given up to the birds, when there was silence but for the rippling streamlet and drowsy hum of the water-mill, but for the distant sheep-bell or sound of cattle across the meadows; it was at such times only the girl resorted thither, with a pleasant consciousness of being at rest, and perfectly, peacefully happy. There was no going there to dream, although the whole surroundings of the place contributed to reverie. Kate Warden possessed not the soul for dreams. A still nature, loving repose, while dwelling with simple enjoyment upon things good and pretty, and yet with it all no dreamer. There was not a wrong thought nor an unkind deed right away back to the cherub days, when she plaited and braided the rushes into baskets, and bore them home filled with buttercups and daisies. She loved every dragon-fly skimming the current; the old cows came down to drink by her side; martins left their nests in the bank for the green haugh above: nothing feared her, and she was not afraid. The flight of bees to flowerets on the knoll, shaken flakes from the early chestnuts, the grey shingled tower of their church, blown beds of heather, brown kine cropping the short pasture, twitter and warble amongst the daffodils, a madrigal from the labyrinth of vine-flowers, buzzing of insects tossing on the herby winds,—it was all God's good world, well loved by her, and the young men of Meadowford might come, might go, but never was Kate disturbed in consequence.

Her home was so removed from the highway, and at such a pleasant distance from the town, it was like living quite in the country; Kate's friends were in consequence few and of

her own sex, Lady Emily Fuller being the chief of them. That good woman made a point of searching out modesty, or its opposite, with indefatigable diligence; and she had long since discovered the qualities of her neighbour on the other side of the river. Retirement, that grave and beautiful mediator between time and eternity, was the sphere in which her ladyship displayed an utter abandonment of sentiment to the majesty of emotion: her whole being vibrated with the intensity of her feeling for those who needed some one to feel for them; and for mothers bereft of their sons she could have laid down her life, so had she suffered when she fought the battle and won. She would think sometimes, "Love for one's mother and love for one's son are the Alpha and Omega of all worth living for, on the human side of the account;" yet the aftermath of her years was ungifted with either. Lady Emily would often wonder why so many people waited until they were ill, or caught in the fangs of adversity, before they became serious and sincere towards their fellows and before God. She would say, "That incarnation of selfishness—indifference, is the ruin of body and soul. Responsible beings—as all are when endowed with the normal healthy faculties—have no business to be indifferent; they are by so doing traitors at their post, bad servants, and false friends: for life opens with perfect friendship towards the creature."

If there was one thing her ladyship detested, it was scandal, especially the petty tale-bearing of country towns. She knew that the spoken word of scandal eddies to the confines of the town in days when the utterer has forgotten it; and she defeated it in many quarters. A communion of such improvers of society would be as invaluable "sisters" as are those who track the noisome pestilence.

Kate's father and mother were plain, well-to-do people, of homely ways and kind-hearted manners,—strongly loving their daughter, with whom neither had ever exchanged a cross word, and studiously avoiding talking or thinking of any possible fear of Kate's being tempted to leave them during their lifetime. Unjust to Kate, perhaps—but then are we not unjust, and selfish too, in our likes and loves? There did

not seem to be any danger of it, no soul on earth could be more contented in its home than Kate; not a wish from morn to eve would alter it for a better. She had grown to a safe and reflective age; the affectionate parents thought within their hearts that all was well, and could not bear to think of what the house would be without their daughter Kate. Down by the water Kate took her work and a book, full as contentedly; independent of poetry, and dwelling upon ideals, of love, and dwelling upon heroes, she participated in real enjoyment, for there was no troublesome unreality, in calm happiness, for there was no unrest. Not because she had no mind—Kate happened to be educated, and had read herself abreast with those superior to her rank in life; there was no love nonsense in the house, and fashion-books she saw but in milliner's windows. Warden was accustomed to winnowing, and, within himself, thought long, applying a rough, safe instinct, before going home from market with a book for Kate in his moleskin coat.

Like those geese which, from a consciousness of their own loquacity, always fly over Mount Taurus with stones in their bills, to prevent any unlucky cackle betraying them to the eagles,* the gossips of Meadowford crossed the meads with reserve, positively had nothing whatever to say against or about the miller's fair daughter; they knew he would hear of it, would trace it to its source, and he was not by any means the man to hear the disparaging word spoken of his daughter without requiring an explanation.

Judge then of Mr Warden's mystified anger and consternation when accosted by a grave and honest farmer, well known to him and trusted, in this wise: "We're so sorrow at home to hear all this about your daughter, and I said belike you'd tell me the ins and outs on't. But there, as my wife said, you mayn't know of it; home's generally the last place that sort of thing circulates to, and far be it from me to be the first to mention it!"

Warden removed his hat and wiped his brow, looking into

* Ælian, lib. 5, cap. 29.

the truthful eyes he had met in that market week by week for thirty years without a suspicion of falseness. He had done business with the man again and again and found him open as the day, and he looked into his eyes as a man does when an old acquaintance has something to communicate touching home interests.

"I don't know what you mean," he said breathlessly, his mind going back to the morning when her lissom fingers fastened his coat, brought his hat and stick, pushed back his hair and arranged it while lightly giving him a good-bye kiss; it was certain there could not be much to hear about Kate, and he bluffly bade the farmer say his say.

The latter noticing his agitation and feeling for him, motioned with his stick to the market hostelry just by the Corn Exchange; it bore the sign of the White Hart, and looking up at it, Warden noticed for the first time in his life how soiled the figure appeared. Farmers and graziers, and salesmen of stock, grain, and farm produce generally, were passing in and out for the market dinner, or to the yard where their vehicles were put up. Warden was known to many, and they nodded with accustomed friendliness; it struck him that, whatever was coming, those at a distance knew nothing of it—we are more often wounded nearer home than at a distance.

They went to a private room, to get away from the noise and bustle. The farmer stood little upon delicacy; he seldom did when acquainting a friend of any way whereby he was being robbed.

"Well, it all comes of the hare-hunting party my landlord has down every year, and it isn't the first time we've wished them further. Being so close, of course my men hear a deal of the goings-on, and one of them high-flier servants talking at our village inn mentioned this young foreigner living near you, coupling his name with that of the miller's pretty daughter. Out of interest for you, I told my man next time 'twas mentioned to get at the truth, and all I can gather without so to say interfering or mixing mysel' up wi' it in any way is, that he's over head an' ears in love with your daughter, and she wi' him; and I'd rather it be your girl than mine."

This outspoken volley had possibility on the face of it, the men understood one another. The speaker held out his hand, took that of the other, and pressed it with a sincerity that was as unlike beating about the bush as was his communication. Mr Warden would rather he had told him some incendiary had fired his garner.

It was wonderfully sharp. He would never have believed a strong man like himself could have felt anything so acutely; but that love of his for Kate was at the root of the strength—to be undermined by a few minutes' idle gossip. He began to shake himself, as he did in the barn. Why should the dry, sharp husks cling to him? He knew what village ale-houses were; knew his darling had not been away from home; and when absent from the house was always to be found in the garden, by the river, or shopping quietly enough in the town. He thanked the farmer with brief, civil words, and walked out. The town, the market, pens with sheep and pigs, implements, horses, grain, light carts, hay, vegetables, busy men, idling women—all looked different, so unlike, that sad-coloured glasses might have been before his eyes. He had done enough of his business to leave the rest. He left it; somehow it all seemed of no importance now. He walked slowly home; sight of the meads caused his eyes to feel hot; he went that way round instead of in at the yard. Kate might be at her favourite spot; he would talk with her alone, where her mother could not come between them and take her part.

The grass was long and deadened his footsteps; she was there, and did not hear his approach. Talking with his daughter was the cause of this sorrow, a youth of eminently prepossessing appearance, and who certainly did not look a very dangerous companion. With his frank manner and debonair gracefulness, he presented a mien that, had the miller seen it under other circumstances, would have impressed him most favourably. Mr Warden did not stand upon sentiment, nor ceremony. Striding towards them with the stride of an honest man and devoted father, he was prepared to hearken to explanations, or if need be pitch the gentleman of fashion into the stream to swim for it.

The youth did not move at his approach. Preserving the same *insouciant* attitude, he plucked a handful of green grass and sent it floating down the stream. Diamonds shone like drops of dew upon that grass, and the hand was white and curved beautifully.

The miller's ire began to rise, but his daughter instantly with glad surprise exclaimed, "Dear father, you are home sooner to-day; I did not expect you yet!"

"So it appears," replied Warden wrathfully, with a frowning look askant at the self-possessed young gentleman, who, upon hearing the relationship existing between the young lady and the being in the moleskin coat, saluted him with distinguished courtesy.

Kate's father stood, hands in the hip-pockets of his coat, broad-shouldered, presenting an honest front, and with an expression of keen sorrow on his good-looking face. He was as susceptible as any one to the deference of courtesy. Clad in the picturesque capa, the youth looked so handsome and gifted with such grace, Warden could not long feel displeasure.

"Run indoors, Kate, while I have a word or two with this young gentleman." Seeing her hesitate sorrowfully, he added, "Do not fear, my girl; I am not angry now."

With a gentle inclination of the head to the other, she retired as he wished. The youth watched the retreating form with such evident admiration the miller could not but feel a glow of pride in spite of his trouble.

"Now, sir. In our country this sort of intimacy does not usually take place without parents being consulted and asked for their permission, which in this case would not have been given."

With a bow as polite as the address was blunt, M. de Gonsalvo explained: "Lady Emily Fuller is a friend of my mother's. When there a fortnight ago your daughter called; she did not see me, but I saw her. I thought her beautiful; my heart was warmed with pleasure. I did not ask questions; her ladyship casually mentioned, when apologizing for leaving the room, that a friend and near neighbour had called to inquire concerning her health. I thought that a friend of her ladyship's

was worthy to be my friend, and when I saw Miss Warden here one day I took the liberty of introducing myself, the only time that we have met before. I am sorry you are displeased. I will avoid this walk for the future if you will pardon Miss Warden an indiscretion for which I alone am to blame."

With this close to the proud *naïveté* of his confession the Prince again removed his sombrero, and Kate, who was peeping from below the garden firs, thought how gallant her young admirer looked.

Not so, Mr Warden. It requires a very refined mind to appreciate *naïveté*. This good man was intolerably angry; but then he was the one injured.

"I am sorry," said he, "that a young gentleman of your standing cannot find some more creditable amusement. Nothing is easier than to do as you have done—nothing more difficult than to erase an impression thus caused. It is not for me to dictate to one from abroad, possibly better off than myself, and I have no doubt a good deal wiser; but allow me to tell you, young sir, if you were a prince of the blood-royal I should not see any justification for your conduct—rather think it the worse, since a prince should be so much the more the gentleman."

M. de Gonsalvo looked with some surprise at the man in the moleskin coat thus taking the trouble to instruct him in courtly etiquette, then with true Spanish dignity answered, "I know what is due to both, sir; you shall not be distressed again." Then with a proud smile he bowed with a kindly condescension that somehow made the miller feel uncomfortable, and he walked away homewards, while the beautiful Kühleborn flitted down to the water again, unable to restrain her impatience. She wound an arm through her father's, looked up in his face pleadingly, and said with innocent penitence, "You are still angry."

The miller plucked at his spotted neckerchief, dug up a clump of grass with the toe of his great boot, looked vacantly at the eddies in the river, and asked shortly, "Don't say anything to your mother about this!" But whether because he would not have that faithful partner of his life grieved also,

or because he feared she might make things worse by taking the girl's part, he did not explain; he merely stooped to kiss her with an almost passionate ending of it, and walked on to the yard, his daughter returning to the house.

If Kate might not tell her mother, she must go to her friend, whose life was given to healing the sorrows of others.

"What ails thee, my child?" asked her ladyship, kindly; "I never saw such a shadow upon that face before."

Kate told her.

"And do you care for him? nay, but you must tell me, or how shall I know what to say?" Her eyes were upon the girl with piercing, kind inquiry.

"A little!" admitted Kate, always truthful and sincere.

"That is fortunate; it might have been a deal. Well, forget it, dear, with an utter and full forgetfulness."

A strange look of dreamy pain came over Lady Emily's gaze: she was not thinking of Kate nor of those at the mill. Oh no! there was a more solemn pain—a shuddering fear for another. She thought of that proud lady-mother whose life and hope were centred in that son. It revived anguish of her own, and laid bare sorrows before which all other apprehensions were but miserable accidents. And when with grave tenderness she gave that advice, she was thinking, not of Kate, but of that mother, solitary in this land, living for her boy alone.

Life for this lady was a mosaic of tender emotion; peace, a ray falling athwart a storm. She could not see the peace of another destroyed without a terrible pang. For the same cause she had known the sorrow which, through many years of mournfulness, cannot tell its burden; had known the broken heart when no tears can flow, nor any word go forth in search of sympathy; had known the suspense when hope lingers on, with no sunshine to bring it into flower; had known youth, the fruitless hours that came to nought and died despairing; had known again and again the dried stains of bitter tears on her thinned pale face; had known that memento, a white-bloomed reminder of a boy's dear fingers come upon between the pages of a book; and because of

all this, shuddered when confronted by the possible woe of another.

Lady Emily Fuller called at the Hermitage the next day. How disconcerted she felt upon finding there a girl to whom Sebastian was exceedingly attentive! "His mother is thoughtless," she said to herself, but passed no comment suggestive of her fear; "she will awaken to her horrible pain quite soon enough." She did, however, say to her friend, "If you would like to see me about anything troubling you, be sure and send in for me." And it was said with a look of such compassionate sympathy, Madame was sorely perplexed; then attributed it to mere womanly solicitude, trifled with the point d'Espagne upon a coverlet, looking with languid admiration at the pretty child arranging it about her feet, and reclined content, for had she not always him with her? And who would have dared to challenge Sebastian's love for her?

In her home, so quiet, so vacant of the music she loved as much as any one, Lady Fuller pondered over it. No member of the Society of Friends could have been dressed with more severe fidelity to unobtrusive colour and to taste. The placid face, the smooth grey hair, the neat cap, all denoted the calmness; but when she looked up absently, during thought, what wonderful wistfulness, infinitely sad and unsatisfied, made the gaze painful. "Our children bring us as much sorrow as joy," she would murmur; "we can no more depend upon them than upon strangers."

Penetrative and full of insight, the dissection of life afforded her but one sensation, the most unmitigated sorrow, she saw the same scars so frequently repeated. Human nature lay open before her like a map, every line of which is known from often journeying across it: all the subtle distinctions and nicer shades and turnings of the mind, all those broken lights which play upon the soul, all those weird gleams of the mortal consciousness, the many emotional glimpses of the stricken self, and those tender betrayals of the sacred foil-nature, which are the glory of life; an outspread chart, looked down upon with microscopic and with morbid vision, and with heart-earnest desire to relieve some of it of its shadow.

Kate Warden called in the afternoon, agreeable to a request of her friend on the preceding day. The girl looked sad and ill at ease. Taking her hands tenderly, Lady Fuller communicated some of the strengthening peace of her own calm nature, and looking affectionately into the tearful eyes, said, "Physicians apply sharp remedies to save their patients sometimes, but we esteem them none the less." The girl inclined her head, thinking she alluded to the request of yesterday. "I have been calling upon Madame de Gonsalvo, not to stay long; they have an addition to the household." She saw the girl's eyelids lifted swiftly, as if to allow a flash of fear to escape, then droop again timorously. Oh the cruel courage and firmness of physicians! "A pretty girl, to whom both Madame and her son were fondly attentive: she is to live with them henceforth."

Then this wise and feeling lady took her young friend to her heart with such compassionate tenderness it soothed and healed the wound she had caused. She led Kate to the sofa, and softly compelled her to sit down, handing her some embroidery the girl was engaged upon. Half mechanically Kate took the piece of cloth; the silken flowers upon it were misty before her eyes, the honeysuckle was indistinct, the jessamine seemed smothered with forget-me-nots, and Lady Fuller's favourite flowers were wholly tintless and unbeautiful. Not until dewy with tears were they clear and sweetly shaped again.

And at the Hermitage the subject of this cloud was basking in the sunshine of delightful content. The warmth of nature, at once the peril and the pride of Prince Sebastian, rendered the society of Jessie an exquisite pleasure. If Jessie noticed it, she gave it no encouragement; her time was absorbingly taken up by attention to her august friend, and this in such quiet fashion, and with so much delicacy, it in no sense displaced those services of Mrs Pomfret, which made *her* homage altogether unapproachable.

Jessie did not think the less of Merry for this comfortable change of fortune; he was constantly in her mind, which dwelt with especial pleasure upon the gratification she hoped he would feel at her being so happily circumstanced.

How about that future—the love in the cottage, and the humble struggling lot to which she had so often looked forward? While her heart would ask this, her eyes would be raised to encounter the love that may burn in the dark eyes of Spain. That graceful youth always seemed posed beneath the stately bannerol of their house, and standing before the glory of heraldic shields emblazoned with chivalry. His treatment of her, distinguished by a gallant deference and an elegant urbanity, was pleasing, if only from the fact of being so unlike any met with before. He was not much older than herself, but their youth was as full of experience as of depth. When Jessie came to Meadowford, she no more left the power to love behind with that old life, than did Sebastian back in his sunny Spain, where, upon the Caminos Reales, he had flashed many an admiring glance at lovely children on their way to the convent *pensions* in galeras and gondolas.

But a little while, and the son of Princess Zenaïde fell a-loving this waif of London streets.

We take his day-dream with honour, shunning the atmosphere of those who try to gauge the youthful lover's soul but to dissect it by the laws which govern the analysis of worms. The dawn of this romance acted like a charm, with its thoughts that were tender as rosy eventide and fragile as Eastern fancy, with its highly-wrought musing — poetry blended with the aroma of flowers, starlight from the soft distance of her eyes.

Soon after Jessie's coming she called at the Nursery, hoping to meet the girl of whom she had thought so much.

Mrs Root remembered her at once; and upon Jessie saying she had merely called to see them, the good woman's delight was extreme.

"Now come in and sit ye down. Lily's up at the houses. She *will* be glad. We've often talked about you."

It was a curious back-room Mrs Root conducted her to, without any pretence to comfort, and as much used in the way of business as was the shop. Rustic pot-stands, grape-bags, a roll of wire-netting, a large chest of tiny drawers holding seeds, dozens of bright green garden-sticks, packets of shreds for nailing, and some hose; metal crosses for holding flowers taken

to the cemetery; circlets of skeleton leaves and wreaths of white crape flowers; also stone and metal wreaths and groups of immortelle. There were iron rose-stakes and terra cotta pots; Dutch bulbs divided to their sorts and colours; pea-guards, suspending baskets, hyacinth vases, and thermometers. And up in a corner, more curious furniture still for this horticultural sitting-room — forks, dibbers, brushes, grafting-tools, asparagus-knives, spuds, hoes, rakes, pruning-saws, trowels, shears, and watering-pots of various sizes. Jessie's eyes were observing the collection while Mrs Root was busy with some gladioli she was sending out for planting; and while she expertly looked the bulbs over to make sure that all were sound, she ran on with her pleasant chatter faster almost than Jessie could keep pace with. "And so you've come to be lady's-maid to the foreign lady at the Hermitage? Don't look surprised at my knowing, for little birds are fond of the Nursery. And glad I am your brother got the place for you. And is it well he is? I do hope so most sincerely. Between you and me, my dear, I think our Lily was rather smitten with your brother, which it's not for me to gossip over, or even to hint at; for of all the places to talk, Meadowford is the worst. And I do assure you everybody so gives themselves up to it, that a poor woman like me, attending to business, and quite at a loss for a word, is thought light of, and looked down on by them as can talk; but as I say, while tongues may cry the fingers may ply, and will you pass me the bass, please! Thanks, my dear. Ah, here's my man Benjamin. Now, Balsam, give a shout for Lily; the young lady's come to see her."

Mrs Root was not out of breath (glorious floriculture), but was called away to the shop, and she closed the door between; while Balsam, having bestowed a kindly look of recognition upon Jessie, gave a shout for his daughter. She was seen coming down the garden path daintily fair as Chloë—arms piled high with beautiful azaleas, lemon, orange-red, creamy-white, her delicate face seen as though rising out from that tracery of blossom. The light cotton in which she was dressed looked becoming: her movements were fleet, light, and grace-

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ful ; duty and amiability were thereby spelt, if the beholder cared to spell by actions : there was symmetry and a charm about her every attitude ; and when she entered, Jessie thought her even prettier than when seen before. The girls interchanged glances, wistfully questioning, telling the truth ; and if there were no *grandes pensées*, there were, at least, deep and tender ones.

"The young lady has called to see you, Lil," explained Benjamin. "It's kind of her. I thanks you, miss. And I'm sure my daughter does."

"Yes," said Lily smiling, placing the flowers down carefully, and taking the other's hand.

A blush mantled upon Jessie's cheek ; she could hardly appropriate the tribute to her kindness. Undefined attraction and curious desire to know more of her had actuated this visit.

Benjamin, who was far from being of a pragmatic nature, instead of questioning or repeating rumours, kindly remarked, "I hopes you like our town, miss ? You certainly live in its nicest house."

"Thank you, Mr Balsam, I like it very much."

"Yes," said the gardener, placidly, "I don't think there's a better. True, I've never bin to another ; but then I haven't occasion, as I'm content with this."

Peaceful, happy light sunned the honest fellow's face. Healthful, in his way wise, he left the ebbing and flowing unrestful world to itself ; easily content with his station, faithfully loving the earth, and every one of its children of "glitter and air," as Rückert calls the flower in his exquisite "*Die sterbende Blume*."

The gardener lowered his voice. "A minister came along t'other day and says to me, 'You'd a looked into chapel afore this, Balsam, if you'd bin any good.' Says I to him, 'There's good, I hope, besides what looks into chapels.' Now, my belief is this—as how I may be good, and you may be good, without showing it off in that way."

Balsam drew his sleeve across his forehead ; when warm, it was like looking at him under a glass, so *glacé* and pellucid did he appear.

He went about his work. And as Jessie looked over the garden and remembered that Merry came with her when last she was there, her heart seemed too full for words. Like the butterflies flitting lightly hither and thither, he had quaffed his nectar on the wing, amongst the flowers, and in the sunshine.

The girls, when alone, gradually lost their reserve.

"I am so pleased to see you again," said Jessie, with ingenuous sincerity.

"Yes; and I you. Is it true that you have left the show?"

"Quite true. I have come to live near you, dear. And if I may, I will run in and see you now and then?"

"Oh do, please! I have only one friend, and shall feel so glad. She is above me in station—it is Miss Warden of the mill."

Here there was a full stop. Jessie wished to allude to Merry but did not know how, and Lily was much too diffident.

She had never forgotten him: the graceful form and handsome face were as vivid in recollection as on the day of his visit. She thought of him with half-happy, half-fearing delight, and with reverent care that no word of hers should spoil the fond illusion. This offer of Jessie's sisterly regard would be much prized. Some wait long for the voice which shall touch the hidden chord vibrating but once in a lifetime, when the friendship slumbering in every soul awakens to the call.

When Jessie went back to the Hermitage, it was with glad self-congratulation at the result of the visit.

"And now," said she, with lofty sacrifice, "if I find that Lily does really love him very much, and that Merry loves her, I will give him up without a murmur; and spend my days in trying to please this gracious lady whose love is so dear and precious to me."

Jessie felt both cheered and supported upon thus renewing acquaintance with the girl so liked at their first meeting. Hitherto through her chequered career, poor Jessie had only been helped by her thoughts—bright visitants, some of them, from a radiant land, shedding glory about her path; but now help had become real in that gentle girl whose sympathy and

friendship looked from out the most tenderly speaking eyes she had ever seen.

And on Lily's side the still repose of her romance was broken. There ensued fluttering, soft anxiety—tremulousness. When she had heard it gossiped that Jessie had come to Meadowford to live, trepidation seized on her. She had all along suspected the relationship between the young man and the retiring and beautiful girl whom he called his sister,—earnestly she longed to know if her surmise was true.

Apart from this, she had formed one of those choice likings for the girl sometimes so ideal in maidenhood, and before which all the love for all the men that ever were is as nothing.

When a painter with magic touch kindles light, life, and fire from the gloomy chaos upon some old canvas, and reshapes obliterated forms of beauty, he tints anew the old conception. So this interview seemed to revive all that had been beautiful and thrilling in the earlier days, before the sweet sorrow of her love warped the delicacy of her life's first fresh dreaming.

With all respect for the cynics and their school, sympathy of one's kind does exercise a healthful influence. Fellowship is but another word for encouragement.

In this town, where Smollett's "pie, made of dormice and syrup of poppies," might have been the family dish—where discontent with stagnation or ambition for a livelier order of life remained utterly unknown—the sole little ripple was caused by the energetic traffic in scandal, and that thrived amazingly.

Ere long, therefore, Lily heard that her new friend and "the proud young foreigner" were the topic of talk.

Although unaware of it, Sebastian did certainly convey, without any disguise, the warmth of his regard for Jessie. The fact could be no longer evaded by her, from the notice others were taking of it. Mrs Pomfret had long been secretly uneasy concerning it. Like Lady Emily Fuller, this devoted friend would not be the one to broach pain. It grew all unconsciously too upon the august lady, without any aid

of any one—advanced like a looming cloud big with a trouble greater than the loss of a kingdom. It made Jessie feel most uncomfortable; she saw her friend's sorrow and overwhelming apprehension, and could do nothing to relieve it. She had not caused the dilemma, nor could she cure it. The Spaniard in love and in battle is seen at his noblest, so impassioned and whole-hearted is his zest; but this makes it the more discomfiting for the object of it. In sore perplexity and unrest, Jessie one day went to that friend of the Nursery and made her a *confidante*. Lily listened with the deepest attention, and with great tenderness she counselled Jessie to open her heart to Madame; such a course would be more calculated to reassure her.

That same day Kate Warden called, ostensibly to purchase shrubs, hoping also to catch her friend alone. She did. Soon they were deep in confidential conversation, so far, that is, as confession and sympathy are concerned.

Lily began to feel in an embarrassed position: here were her two friends, each reposing their trust in her with that trust in rivalry.

It was now in Lily's power, if she would, to improve upon her own hopes. But, no; she was of very different nature to that; and next time Jessie came to see her, strongly advised being true to Merry by leaving Meadowford at once. Not without a struggle did she recommend so stringent a plan. But Jessie also saw it to be right, and when she went back she craved an audience alone with her royal mistress.

The Princess, who loved Jessie so much, yet who loved her son so much more, witnessed the girl's agitation with the keenest emotion; and they were alike in their hesitation and avoidance of the theme.

The Princess could not feel surprised at her son's infatuation: she had so fervidly set the initiative.

At last Jessie, with frankness worthy of her nature, fell on her knees before the Princess, and in thrilling tones imploded her innocence.

"You know, dear Madame, that it is not my fault?"

In reply the Princess took the trembling girl to her heart;

a weak and sad woman, torn by the dread lest her idol's love had departed from her.

"You do not think me selfish that I feel it?" murmured the Princess, with emotion.

"No; oh no! And I am shocked to have caused this sorrow. How you will hate me!"

"Not so, my child; the rather feel eternally grateful for your noble conduct. Few are so absolutely without vanity—so honourable and compassionate. No greater favour could be conferred than your conduct has bestowed on me."

The girl's head was bowed beneath this praise. She lifted her face, tearful and flushed: "I come to entreat you will command me to leave you."

The Princess arose, stood haughtily yet with protecting majesty: "No; you came to me for a home, at my invitation, and *I will not* withdraw my care of you."

The grand passion in attitude and words slew the girl's fear. She raised the Princess's hand to her lips and merely said, "I will be worthy your reliance, my lady," then left the room. Seclusion and privacy could alone restore composure.

The Princess suffered terribly. The heroism she displayed did not allay her fears on Sebastian's behalf. Her love for him was of that nature which would be wounded to the death if his proved retractive.

Next day Jessie was glad to go to her friend of the garden and unburden her mind of its weight.

She found Lily in the hothouse where we first met her, sitting in the same place, arranging a bouquet of flowers. The glass and hot air made it oppressively warm. The wealth of fragrance seemed to change the atmosphere of this interior to Eastern softness; it was as another clime. Lily's favourite resort this; in the languid, unruffled, sweet laden air; she had first seen *him* there! Jessie went to the niche where, embowered in blossoms, maidenhair ferns, and grasses lovely as the flowers, they were quite retired, and shut into a world by themselves—a world bounded by the bushy kalmia, where *he* had leaned with his handsome head on line with its white waxen flowers.

Lily looked gladly up as Jessie drew near, and as she stooped to kiss her, could see that something further had happened. Jessie told her what. Lily shook her head. "It leaves the danger open; this gracious fondness for you will prove a thorn that will pierce the lady's heart."

With a quivering lip, Jessie looked down in distress.

"Let us try to look at this difficulty and find a way out of it," said Lily. "Placing Madame aside, it affects yourself seriously, for if Mr Tattergast came to Meadowford and heard the people's tittle-tattle, what could, what *would*, he think?"

"He would never think badly of me whatever he heard," said Jessie, with generous faith in her lover's trust.

"He may be different to most men," said Lily, quietly.

"He *is* different," cried Jessie warmly, utterly ignoring the fact of Merry's being the most jealous of his sex.

Lily burnt with the pain the other's enthusiasm caused her; she, too, thought as highly of him.

"You acted as you thought for the best, dear Jessie. If events have turned out so perplexingly, the only course is to get through in the best and most prudent way possible—certainly to quit the service of Madame."

"I have, as you know, proposed it, and Madame wishes it little as I do."

"Then she should ask her son to travel for a time; and that, I suppose, is not likely. You want influence now, greater than we possess."

"Will mine do?" asked a sweet, mirthful voice, its music ringing on the girls' hearts while it seemed to stop their beating. Both looked up. There stood Merry, leaning in his usual careless, graceful fashion, an elbow on the pot of bushy kalmia, its flowers on line with his handsome head, with its careless, graceful curls; his bright and meaning eyes watching the gardener's daughter with excess of gratitude. Precisely as on the ever-memorable day when she had first seen him.

Jessie felt faint and overcome. She could not advance to meet her lover. Delicate of constitution, fragile of frame, with feelings overwrought, she staggered fainting, to be caught in the arms of her friend.

Merry was by her side instantly. He felt distressed to have caused it. "The surprise was too sudden," he murmured.

"She has not been well," answered Lily, in a low tone, not daring to look up at him, standing so close: "the unfortunate circumstance we were speaking of has worried her."

"I have heard all about it. I am the bearer of news that will set all to rights." He leaned tenderly over Jessie, stroking her soft hair, seeing the ashen lips with grievous pain.

The gardener's daughter had no restoratives at hand, but she bore her friend to the door, and, regardless of Mrs Root's exotics, gave her the benefit of the cold air. "She was in difficulty between the struggle to faithfully serve you, and faithfully serve her lady."

"I understand it all. And how can I sufficiently thank you, Miss Lily? Truly I was right in wishing you two should become friends."

She could only murmur indistinctly that she had tried to advise for the best.

Soon the unconscious one became sensible, and it was like coming out of a strange, sorrowful dream, to open her eyes upon her lover's face, the sunshine and the flowers.

Then slowly back to the house, where in the horticultural sitting-room Merry and Jessie were left alone.

What an affecting greeting was that which followed, and how much there was to tell! Jessie felt as though she could never tire of listening, and of gazing at her restored one. Somehow the interval with its darkness and light seemed to sink utterly in the joy of thus meeting him again.

"You will find I have already called at the Hermitage, dear Jessie, and, I trust, put matters in order."

CHAPTER XXV.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

PRINCESS ZENAÏDE passed sleeplessly the night following upon Jessie's audience. Her attached companion had sought delicately to cheer and support the beloved lady; but consolation even at Pomfret's hands had its limits, and the Princess went to her couch very low in spirits, resolved to speak with Sebastian on the morrow. During the night she thought of some words spoken long ago by her friend Lady Fuller. Strange words, unforgotten: "May your son's face never be turned from you, nor his heart seek other love than yours!" Dwelling on this foresight the Princess also recalled her ladyship's recent remark, "If you would like to see me about anything troubling you, be sure to send in for me!" and she remembered the accompanying look of compassionate sympathy.

In the morning the Princess sent for her friend, and Lady Fuller came *en déshabillé*, with the willingness she always displayed when summoned in haste.

Then freely and fully and with moving pathos the Princess told her friend why she had sent for her and what she had suffered.

"I have been expecting your message," said her ladyship, speaking in the sweet, subdued tone natural to her; and she looked with unfathomable sorrow at the woful face before her, its resplendent beauty pale from harassed thought and sleepless vigil.

The Princess took her thin, sensitive hand, pressing it gratefully: "Visit my widowed heart comfortingly, with your gentle persuasion, to a better frame of mind."

There was something infinitely pathetic in the humble entreaty. Her ladyship answered softly, "Let me serve you in all fond compassion and full understanding of your sorrow; allow me the privilege of sharing this burden. Alas! my friend, human ties are but too frail; how many of us find them broken at the time when we most desire to lean upon their support. I speak from sad experience when I tell you that dependence upon the human is a very grievous mistake, inevitably resulting in an awakening from such confidence. We have a Higher Friend, a safer tie; there *only* is peace. Forgive me—I presume. Permit me to aid you if I can."

The greatest power given to humanity is that of lightening care and leaving a smile.

When we are sad we do not go to the comedian who amuses us when we are dull, but to one who is sad too, or who can be sad with us.

The grave tenderness of this friend, with the echo of a past mournfulness of her own, seemed to soothe the Princess.

"Let me look into your eyes, dear friend, let me look deep down; calm rest is there, and I would find some of it."

In the ordinary way eyes are awkward, if not foolish, in their exercise. The few people who know how to use them are they who read the two great books—nature and the soul. Lady Fuller was one of the latter, and a glance from her healed, made strong, lifted upward.

"My friend," she said, softly, "do not be unhappy; those of us who do not find sorrow very real find reality very sorrowful. Believe me, the steps leading up to our happiness are soon out of repair." Then with the kindest of smiles, "I shall be so sorry to part with you, but—you must travel; it will be better than sending your son away. Return to Spain, or, should that be impracticable, visit France. Sebastian will resume his old devotion to you, and all will then be well."

"Alas! Sorrowfully do I confess that our means are inadequate. I might even now be retrieving some of our ill-fortune, but am unable to take the requisite proceedings."

"I too am poor or would prove the friend it is in my heart to be. I have always thought that the most noble problem

in this world is not, how the poor are to become rich and great, but how the rich are to become poor and humble. In this case, however, I must reverse that order."

Mrs Pomfret brought a letter to her lady. It was a large, rough envelope, addressed to Madame de Gonsalvo, and it evidently contained a key.

The Princess looked up inquiringly. Mrs Pomfret explained: "I would not have troubled you, Madame, but the young man brought also an ancient chest marked with symbols of your religion."

"This is very curious; will you read it, please?"

Mrs Pomfret did so:—

A well-wisher of the Princess Zenaïde asks her acceptance of the memorials of the Church sent with this, for the purpose of enabling Her Highness to take such proceedings as may be most advantageous to her interests.

Great was the surprise of Lady Fuller upon learning the true grade of her friend.

"Will you go and see what it is?" asked the Princess of her companion.

Mrs Pomfret did so. She returned to say that the chest contained a quantity of ecclesiastical plate, very old and costly, with an astonishing wealth of precious stones. The Princess looked quickly at Lady Fuller.

It was Saul Weir's method of helping the royal exiles. He had arranged that this chest should be included with his share of the Treasure, in his delicacy feeling that the Princess could accept, under cover of her religion, what she might not if sent in any other form.

Thus the treasure of Monarchs long passed away would help this noble lady to find happiness again.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN MEMORIAM.

AN unromantic sight is that of an old woman getting over a stile; but when a gentleman hurries to offer his support, we say there is chivalry if not romance. An unusual sight is that of a poor man helping a princess, but regarding it we say that disinterestedness is not yet dead, however often its demise has been lamented.

At the present day the good people who preach and the wise people who teach rule the roast; but here is a man who acts—performs a splendid deed in the time any one else would have been recovering breath from the shock of conceiving such a project.

Saul Weir, type of the sinew and strength of nations: lion-hearted, cool-headed, strong-handed.

Brave, intrepid, fearless, patient, persevering, and *unselfish*.

A man who owns this largeness of soul and massiveness of character does not take up a handful of diamonds and fling them in the face of the rainbow for gathering their swift, sharp sparklets of colour, but unostentatiously converts them to a noble practical use.

Few knew better how to estimate at its relative value any such accumulation of wealth. Saul Weir determined some good should be done with it, and he thought it was time.

Some of the strongest minds have been the most weak in the glare of the day's public openness. This man is coming to the front, after a very unobtrusive novitiate; how will he deport himself? Depend on it he will be watched to be

caught tripping, laughed at for his awkwardness, jeered at for his slips of grammar, and the peacocks will fume at his advent; but even the brilliant displeasure of peacocks, although it may make the peahens weep, will scarcely cause much difference to this very insensible fellow.

Life is song, wherever it be, only sometimes it is dreadfully out of tune; but here is a life that is all in tune, that is always in time, and a life that is ever in tune and time is the life that defeats the world.

The Treasure is divided, the poor are become rich! And now it will be farewell to mitre-box, adze, and saw; chisel, plough, and hammer will be thrown aside; the smell of pitch-pine and teak shall no more be grateful in the nostrils of this workman; the rabbit-plane will be a strange implement, and all carpentry and joinery forgotten experiences. Is that it?

Well, wait and see. At present the shop and business are not for disposal, although Saul Weir is away. He has gone on a journey, taking his girl-pupil with him. Arthur and Herrick are left in charge.

That was a glad day when Merry walked into Saul Weir's shop. Back safe and sound, and bringing the boy with him. He had done him good service again, and Merry's gratitude was great. So was his annoyance, upon discovering what had become of Jessie. Then Saul compelled him to go down to Meadowford as soon as their arrangements were made. He guessed that love is brittle, and that in the frost of a quarrel it may break in two.

And Merry went in search of his sweetheart with no very pleasant feelings, but when he heard that conversation his anger melted, and the more agreeable side of his disposition asserted itself. He also wished him to be the bearer of the valuable present to the Princess.

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It was a happy reunion of the boy-friends.

In the little sitting-room at the back of the shop, Herrick narrated to his intent companion all his adventures since their separation. The boys had it all to themselves—there was no need to hurry over the account, and Herrick did justice to

the opportunity. Penryllon listened with breathless interest, sometimes with a wondering gaze riveted upon his friend, forgetting that he himself had passed through more and worse vicissitude.

Presently Herrick came to the most interesting part, as Arthur considered it, descriptive of his search for Merry in the wilds of New York. The boy's excitement became intense as Herrick pictured his efforts and disheartening failures, until it had occurred to him to try the inns and hotels; then his eyes glistened while he explained how he had at last found him, lying delirious, untended, and uncared for. He was not the boy to boast of how he devotedly watched until Merry was better and able to get away, but Penryllon, knowing his friend of old, could imagine it all.

Herrick could not stop longer than to acquaint his companion with the whole of these events. He was in grave anxiety about his parents, and wishful to assure them in person of his safety.

And when Herrick went away he congratulated himself that his friend Penryllon had fallen upon a very good home indeed; it was impossible not to like Mr Weir, and the housekeeper was kind and motherly.

While these events happened at Meadowford and in London, Saul Weir was upon his travels.

He was going to celebrate becoming a rich man, by taking a holiday and giving Daisy a treat.

He would show her a glimpse of Liverpool shipping, and also the glorious scenery of Scotland, which he knew she felt an interest in for Archie's sake.

Their destination in the first place was the nearest banking town to the humble shepherd-home on the far hillside where their friend Archie Campbell was reared, and which his bowed and sorrow-stricken parents would not leave, for they loved two things in life passing the telling by words—their boy and that lonesome home. They could not give up both, rather cling the fonder to their home from its association with him.

But they were poor. The outlook of days when their

activity would be lessened was a gloomy one, and caused the old mother many a sorry pang. Still their trust in God was fine as was their simple mode of life, and they tried to feel that He who directed the steps of the shepherd to where stray sheep had wandered, on the drear tracts bare and white with sharp endless snow;—that He would watch over them. Their friend in London, plain as themselves and as simple, had helped of his best, even to the extent of a pinch on his own resources. He was now about to do more—provide for them as a son should, with no half measures, but for the remainder of their lives.

He arranged all this before going to see them, and while there he disclosed nothing of the plan. He wished it to remain an anonymous benefaction, or at the most as resulting from the success of their son's poems.

He felt glad of this power to help when he saw the signs of their straitened circumstances, and the brave struggle to meet everything, with the true Highlander's dignity of faith.

His heart was moved to notice how thin the mother looked: grief had dragged at her very life and worn her to the shadow of herself. He cheered them greatly, however, for he brought news of the wide appreciation of Archie's work, the acknowledged superiority of those flowers of thought grown on the bleak hillside; not faded and scentless, but living anew with vividness and fragrance. Their hearts leaped to have it told them; and it seemed as though Archie must yet live to share in this good news.

It was nobly in character with Saul's nature, to think of his poor friend's mother the very next thing after he and his cousin had decided upon the munificent present to the Princess.

And here in the home full of reminders of the young poet, he felt glad he had done as described. His cheek flushed with emotion, while memories crowded upon him of that bright, starlike soul, gloomily shadowed, then extinguished in the endless night. But the loveliness of his mind lived in the product of his genius; those poems, read by Saul so

reverently, raised him to higher and more spiritual thought than even he had known.

He had grieved after Archie's death as only those strong, perfectly strung men do grieve, with a real, grand sorrow, unseen and unsuspected.

Yet both the mother and the friend found comfort in his lines. And it is singular, but it seems to be the province of melancholy to provide comfort.

An element with which Melancholy, the daughter of Disappointment, is allied, happens not unfrequently to be bitterness. There was this undertone to his poetry: the vivid sorrow and keen repining which, when read as belonging to the dead, wounds so deeply those who loved the lost.

The poetry of Archie Campbell, now the legacy of his friend, was both bitter and sweet: but spontaneity and spirituality dignified every effort of his genius, which belonged to those inspiring and melodious forces that have worked mightier wonders than the sword in Scotland and in England.

For him, the fingers of the wind played tremulous music, and dallied lovingly with echoes each of which was a song; and the sweetest pointed to immortality. Faint with the love of his few short summers he passed away; amongst later flowers, lingering like him.

For him, this world was filled with great masses of tune, broken into a thousand rugged shreds of song, with no sweetness and no softness; and he made these sweet and soft.

For him, this world was filled with great visions. Waving breadths of prairie grass, odorous, palely splendid; thick-stemmed flowers burning with colour; shady leopard haunts; wide rivers surging down by cool columns of giant rushes; wild strains sweeping the untrodden plateau, the moan of night winds on the mighty lakes; snow-clad, venerable mountains; the seas of heather in his native land; calm bays tender with the hues of evening; southern vales, where the land to the horizon grew roses; the pine-clad heights of majestic solitudes; golden fancies of autumn woodlands. He took these things and made music.

His verse, his gorgeous pictures, his warmth of love, were tinted with the glow of his splendid skies, and many-hued as are the lakes of his land of love and song.

Poetry, hand in hand with piety, and a life attuned to harmonious proportion.

The poetry was cast aside ; the poet starved !

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE REQUITAL.

FRANCIS GRATTAN, as the time for the sale drew near, waxed irritably impatient for it to be over. Sight of each book smote him; he could have gone on his knees to them and besought their mercy had it been of use, so piercing was the agony of the parting. His very soul would pass hence with them. Life was slowly ebbing away at the dread of it. The shop with bared shelves would become his coffin, he knew right well, and he did not desire to live when despoiled of his treasures. To him came Agnes, full of fire as usual; it warmed away the gloominess of his dejection. He dared not show it before his granddaughter; she made short work of routing it. Agnes came with a request:

"I want you to stop away the whole day of the sale, grandpa," very softly.

"No," cried the old man, passionately; "I will seize the heaviest tome I possess, and brain that infernal auctioneer!" Then he sat down, lapsed into moody reverie. She wound her arm about him soothingly.

"I can do that as well as you," she said calmly. And she would have been as good as her word.

It sobered him. He turned round, took her hand, looking up in her face pitifully, and in a tone which thrilled her, said, "You will never know all I am going through, my child."

"But I do know," she answered, her voice tremulous with feeling, yet underlying that softness was the necessity for calm control to be exerted upon this sorrow.

He sat swaying like some old riven and splintered tree in a storm, whose venerable limbs are seared by the lightning and scourged by piercing, desolating blasts.

He had suffered greatly, was to suffer more, and nervously feared it. He would have welcomed some Lethean refuge.

An imaginary raven was perched on his choicest book-shelf, with a drear, hollow-echoing NEVERMORE!

The ghosts of thought rose vividly, marshalled in a grey and gloomy rank, to overwhelm him by the accumulation of deeds undone and good acts unperformed.

A weird funereal air was abroad. The shop looked sombre before his dim eyes; the cases seemed hung with a pall; he might have been carrying on a second-hand book business amongst the Cimmerii.

Agnes was ever trending upon these shadowy portents, and like the shepherd's boy, piping as though he should never be old, she played them away with spirit.

Should the acts of the aged ever be written, there will in that volume find chronicle more real humanity and more valuable endurance, more simple faith and unpraised heroism, than any book has ever yet contained.

Francis Grattan could not tell this girl half he was going through—could not have told it to any one. One may tell commonplace emotions to each other, but the more secret can never be told.

And how passionate he had grown—the outcome of his suffering, that grand displeasure which is too magnificent to admit so small a thing as anger. He would not submit to his grandchild's reasoning in favour of better times, nor lend himself to her more hopeful view of things. What hope could there be for him when the wretches were abroad who would desecrate the Temple? He violently opposed consolation, and sat defiantly alienated, as transcendent in his misery as was Job, who parried able argument and sophistical reasoning until a brick-flagged court was transformed into the greatest legal, moral, and religious court of any time.

Said Grattan: "The idle minutes wasted in this world over

stupid talk would make angels weep were they doomed to listen to it."

So he sat in his sorrow, silent.

Well, then, if she might not comfort him, Agnes must serve him. She stealthily removed the very choicest of the old books he had been wont to pore over: and would not iron law have broken every bone in her body for that! Agnes snapped her fingers in the face of the law, would have grimaced a judge out of countenance, ay, and have stolen his wig, and sold it to buy her poor grandpa a book! With all this it was well that Grattan had the girl; she saved him from himself. Her vivacious influence was regnant, with all his contrariness. As the day drew near she became terribly excited within herself, but would let him see none of it. She was fearful of the effect upon him.

The sale aroused interest throughout the country, for Grattan's was one of the old-established, widely-known collections.

Buyers hovered like birds of prey: catalogues flew broadcast, with the conditions and day of sale: men occupied at the heartless business came to and fro; how Grattan hated the sight of them! And he sighed, "Would I were a Samson!"

Many of the old books were dilapidated.

"Don't you rebind your books?" asked a clerk putting them together in lots.

"They would be no use to me if I did," answered the old man surlily.

"But it would tend to preserve them."

"People who come to me don't want preserved books. You can make them that when you've got them;" and he turned on his heel, with fretful ill-temper.

The clerk took up a book so musty and worn, he scarcely liked to touch it, for he was an elegant young man, wearing rings and a flashing scarf-pin; although a clerk of the works, literature was not much in his way, unless it was that of the casino. He touched the volume gingerly, it had the damp chill feel of a long-buried object, and it smelt mouldy as the

grave. When brought from vaults under an old castle where it had been put away with others and forgotten, it had not been opened for fifty years. It was highly prized by Grattan, who knew its value.

"That's no good, is it?" asked a quiet voice at the clerk's elbow.

He turned officiously, and saw a pretty girl. These people were in trouble, down in the world, *ergo* were to be insulted.

"I'll give it you for a kiss!" said he.

"All right," chimed she, with spirit. And his vanity was soothed; she appreciated his condescension. He gave her the book, and then she repaid him with a box on the ear that knocked him off his stool.

Nor did she run away afterwards. A decidedly pugnacious young lady, Miss Sedgwick would have settled him and his employer single-handed.

In the course of her shopping, Agnes often looked in at a worthy woman's who resided some streets away; she had made her acquaintance when quite a little girl, and had kept it up, for the old lady happened to suit her. She dealt in home-made sweets, hardbake, and confections of various kinds. Miss Sedgwick had a sweet tooth, and what little pocket-money she spent upon such things went there. And this was the hiding-place to which she had taken the books she saved from the wreck. Thither she bore off her latest addition. But that clerk, who was smarting severely, suspecting something of the sort, followed her; it was certain a young man of his importance was not to be boxed with impunity. He discovered how matters stood, and as this was a serious offence, both Miss Sedgwick and her friend were caught in a worse trouble.

This blow really seemed as though it would finish off poor Francis Grattan. Moved by love for the culprit, and overwhelmed in disgrace, he moaned for a ray of comfort where, verily, there seemed nothing but the blackness of despair. Her peril roused him from the apathy of pain; he went out, saw a solicitor, and placed the case in his hands. He walked home more bowed than neighbours had ever seen him. The

solicitor, like many another, was an arrant knave; he took the poor old scholar's money—so hardly spared—and did nothing for it.

Grattan seldom went to his door now; he could not bear to be seen. An aged scholar is more susceptible, more painfully sensitive than any other being, and this trouble was breaking him fast.

The worst day had come, when the lots were to be viewed. A crowd trooped in to do so. "They could not come to buy when it would have done me good," muttered Grattan, his eyes moist with the hot tears at being powerless in his own shop, helpless while his beloved books were roughly pulled about, turned over, and rudely inspected. One old bookworm is bound to think another old bookworm a ferocious old savage, but when it comes to preying upon the vitals, as this was, the eyes can no longer gaze out of the head, and the heart sickens with woe.

Grattan sat down on the step leading to his sitting-room with averted face, and so awful a desolation that even one of those hard-hearted brokers went to him and in his coarse fashion tried to cheer him: "Bear up, old man—the best of friends must part."

The scholar started as though galvanized, his brain reeled beneath his trouble; he knew not what he was doing, and stood more erect than for many a year. He raised a hand furiously, as though sweeping the crew aside, "Go!" he shouted madly,—*"all of you. Not a book shall be touched. They are mine, all mine!"*

He rushed forward, looking imposing with awful wrath, his arms outstretched, and the straggling hair, now snowy white, tossed back and falling over his shoulders, his wondrous eyes flashing with fury, his livid face distorted with indignation.

Strangers and those who knew him fell back. It seemed profanation touching the books before that anguish—the wreck was so sad, reason lost with the rest, and it touched the most callous.

"Go!" he shouted, the blood welling to his white lips. *"They are mine; you dare not touch them!"*

A strong man pushed through the crowd to his side. "It is true!" he shouted magnificently, supporting the tottering scholar; "they are BOUGHT IN! ALL DEBTS ARE PAID!"

Grattan looked into that kind face with stupor—he could but just remember him. Saul bore the trembling form to the inner room, and left the throng to clear.

He had brought Agnes in with him. She sought by her tender wiles to restore her grandfather's wonted expression; but he broke into a mad peal of laughter, that rang all down the shop, and caused those standing there to shudder. Then he took Saul's arm with an air of great confidence, whispering, "They thought to rob me of my books—or was it one of my horrible dreams? I cannot tell—but they are mine—mine—are they not?"

Looking up with such wistful questioning, yet blank vacancy, it moved Saul to tears. The old man's head fell back on Saul's breast, and he seemed to sink into a sad inaction. Then Saul bethought him: a remedy—a random shaft, but it might succeed. The shop was by this time clear. He placed the old man on the sofa, face to the wall, sent Agnes for some blankets and a quilt, and when she had brought them he carefully covered Grattan; then beckoning Agnes into the shop, he closed the sitting-room door.

"Now," said Saul, "quickly as possible, let us replace the books exactly as they were before; tell me where they go."

She did so, helping herself as well, wonderingly. Swiftly they did their work, and soon a portion of the shop was restored to its old appearance. Now and again Saul went lightly to ascertain if Grattan had moved. No; he was in the same position, and very still.

For some three hours was the work of restoration going on. When it was complete, even to the lobby, Saul standing in the shop, gave a great shout for Grattan. "Come, be quick, Mr Grattan! If you don't find me that 'Servii Honorati' I must be going. Mr Grattan, I say! Come, man, come!"

He waited with calmness the result.

Some minutes passed, then the sitting-room door-handle was seen to move, and the door was opened as with difficulty;

there leaned Grattan, weak and white, as though coming out of a feverish illness.

Saul took no notice, but waited as though impatient to be gone. He had sent Agnes with a message to Daisy at the hotel close by, not wishing her to witness this painful process.

The old man looked dreamily down the shop, saw everything as he was wont to have it, and passed his shaking hand across eyes and brow.

Saul waited with inward suspense of the most painful intensity.

There was a great struggle, then old associations conquered. He walked with method if feebly, with quiet thought, with the old characteristic sadness. He went to where the ladder was kept, placed it against the wall, and began to mount to where, on the topmost shelf, the book was kept.

Saul carelessly walked near. There was no occasion; the scholar's movements were regulated by steadiness, a firm hold, a correct sight. Removing the book with caution, he came down with it.

"Here it is, sir," said with tone so familiar to Saul, and that would, indeed, never be forgotten. Its soft hollow depth was a little more indistinct, but the mild, low, dreamy undertone was the same.

"The price?" asked the buyer, shortly.

"Three pounds."

He paid it. "Any other choice 'Commentarii'?"

Grattan went to where another stout folio was shelved, and as quietly brought it.

He seemed to have passed through and out of the fiery ordeal.

Saul's stratagem succeeded. He restored the old student's reason. And this was not less a work of mercy than the restoration of his valued collection.

He could be left now in safety. Settled in circumstances, his treasury of wisdom replaced, the mind would recover its equability perfectly when alone in the familiar scene.

Saul took his leave without any sign of sympathy or solici-

tude. Not because he did not feel them, but it would have marred the effect produced.

He quickly joined Daisy and Agnes.

"Return to your grandfather now. Do not allude to the past; be as cheerful as possible; let him busy himself with his books, and go on the same as usual. He will soon be better."

Agnes thought this man's a noble nature, if ever there was one—too noble to be thanked; and yet her heart was aching with gratitude. He noticed her agitation.

"I know all you feel—all you would say. Never mind about doing so, my child, as time is valuable just now, and Mr Grattan needs all your strength. God will reward your loving care for him. Good-bye."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN WHICH SAUL WEIR IS SEEN TO ADVANTAGE.

THE last week in June, flooded with the warmth of the month of roses, yet was there none of summer's languor or faint oppression.

All sunshine, without and within the Herongate, for the Squire's heart had been surprised into the most delighted happiness.

That poor and obscure student of health and its laws, whom they crossed paths with in so strange a manner, had made good his determination of affording relief to Mary Masheter. He achieved a success which had baffled the skill of the physicians. Miss Masheter could walk both with ease and freedom from pain. Her malady was conquered by aid of that science to which Saul Weir had applied himself.

They were about to purchase a residence at Bournemouth, Mary's favourite spot, to afford enjoyment of her restored power of taking exercise.

Mr Masheter, in the fulness of his gratitude, spent many an hour devising some plan of reward for their benefactor; but he was so rich already, and the Squire could think of no course likely to gratify him. It distressed the worthy man exceedingly. He would have given anything for this restoration to health of his daughter.

At last he resolved upon asking Saul point-blank what he could do in return. He did so a day or two before their departure to the south.

"We are, as you know, going away for an indefinite period; before doing so, I want you to grant me a favour. I am under the greatest obligation to you that one man can feel towards another—what can I do in return? I have taxed my fancy, and thought of a hundred ways, not one of which seems any acknowledgment for the service you have done us. Now, will you help me out of my dilemma, and suggest in what manner I can meet you?"

As the Squire asked this, his kind, candid face looked distressingly solicitous, and his friend smiled. "Certainly, Mr Masheter," he replied with simplicity; "if you are not too strongly attached to it, sell me the Herongate!"

The Squire opened his eyes in astonishment. "You do not mean this? Why, it will not be conferring any favour upon you."

"A very great favour. But you did that, remember, when helping us in the first instance. If you can without a pang part with the estate, I shall esteem the transfer the greatest return you can make me."

"I understand. You would live in the old home of your ancestors?"

"No," answered Saul quietly, shaking his head. "Hugh Edred has a better right here, and a far dearer interest in the place; it is in his favour I wish this transfer made out, and I will pay the just demand for it."

Still the Squire hesitated. He could not bear to take money of one who had rendered him that signal service.

Noticing his hesitation, Saul said, "You do not care to leave it—Miss Masheter is too attached to the old place?"

"Dear me, no; we should be glad to get away; every portion of the place is so associated with her illness. If you are really serious I shall be relieved to dispose of it, and I will certainly hand it over liberally."

"Then that is settled," said Mr Weir, gaily, "and we will have the requisite formalities put into execution. All your personally valued furniture and heirlooms you will of course remove; all that was here when you came I should like to remain."

"I understand your motive, it is a noble one. I noticed Mr Edred was affected when going through the rooms."

As soon as the legal documents were completed Mr Weir went to London, to the hotel where Edred was stopping.

After a warm, friendly greeting, Saul told him plainly what he had done, not that he wished to be thanked, but in accordance with his clear system of doing things. Edred bluffly said, "Then you may transfer it back again, my dear fellow. You do not suppose I would hear of such an arrangement. No; I am off back to the States. The course you propose would only induce me to remain in England, for greatly as I love the West, I love the Herongate more."

"But sit down," said Weir, comfortably, with leisure taking a chair himself; "I am going to talk to you like an English nephew. Now, Edred, your father and mother lived there, you were brought up there, you self-exiled yourself out of pique, because your birth would never bring your just, although not legal deserts. They stowed that wealth away for you. Pardon my referring to an affecting past. Mrs Edred went through much that you should have it. I was witness to her ardent desire to that effect. What I have taken upon myself to do, if you come to look at it fairly, will appear but a just act, and in unity with right."

Hugh seized the other's hand. "You are a noble fellow; you improve my opinion of the British, whom I have always thought mean to the core. Some men represent craft as being centred in the red-skins. I have hitherto found more nobility on the prairies and shores of the great lakes and banks of the great rivers than anywhere under the sun, but you teach me how an Englishman can behave with as great dignity and majesty as an Indian. I'll accept your gift, Saul Weir, and will live amongst you."

As he said this with the bluff pride and rugged distinction inseparable from him, he might really have been back on the plains receiving courtesy of some mighty brave.

Then they had some talk about the morrow, the day fixed for the wedding of Saul's cousin and partner in the Treasure; for they were both, as a matter of course, invited to be present.

When the carpenter left he walked rapidly homeward, for he wanted to finish the gift he was going to present to the happy pair. It was to be a new trunk, which Mr Weir naively considered as useful a thing as could be, especially for people of a nomadic turn; and the good-natured workman was expending his most ingenious contrivance upon it. His hands had been so full of business of one sort and another, he had not done much at it lately, hence his extra haste; he walked along quickly, entered at his door quickly, with a pleasant nod for Penryllon as he did so.

"Mr Redland is in the parlour, sir, with Miss Daisy."

Saul Weir's brow was wrinkled a moment.

"Ah! I will go in and speak to him."

He did so, shaking hands more as a matter of form than as a pleasure.

"Have you been here long?"

"Not very, Mr Weir. I am unfortunate in finding you absent; this last two or three times I have not seen you."

"Three, sir," said the other, shortly; "it is as well to be precise. It seems as though you knew when I should be away;" looking very straight at him.

Mr Redland's pale cheek flushed under this unusual bluntness, as he thought it. Daisy went to Saul's side, and said, "I asked Mr Redland to come, dear, or he would not have done so."

"I am not so sure of that," observed Redland, with a beautiful smile; "you must not be surprised if the dog to whom you have spoken kindly, comes again for more kind words."

The extreme humility of the reply, and its pathetic undertone of loneliness, caused Saul to feel sorrow for his observation.

"You are welcome," he said with simple brevity, and proceeded to resume his work in the shop. The door between was open, and he saw the light of happiness upon both their faces.

"Daisy is getting to like that young fellow better than she does me," thought he, with a lump in his throat; but he

worked away with a will, and it soon disappeared. Daisy came to him.

"Mr Redland would like to come into the shop,—may he do so?"

"Of course he may," looking up gratefully. How soon we feel gratitude! how soon the same feeling vanishes!

Daisy went into the house. Saul sent the boy on an errand.

"Is your uncle well, sir?" asked the carpenter, pushing forward a stool for him to sit down on, and still working away with energy.

"I am glad to tell you a great change for the better is to be remarked in him, and it surprises no one more than myself; he is returning to his old avocations—broken off for very many years—with an almost juvenescent vigour. He seems quite to have shaken off the incubus which has been oppressing him for so long. You cannot think how glad I feel, for he caused me much anxiety, his age and enfeebled health unfitting him for the laborious experiments he was before engaged in."

"Yes," said Mr Weir quietly, working his plane with precision.

"His return to the ranks of science," continued Mr Redland, "was warmly greeted by those who hold there cannot be one student too many in a body so valuable to mankind."

"I believe you belong to that body, sir?" in the same quiet tone.

"No; my research is confined to philosophy. But I was going to say that they have generously overlooked his extraordinary crotchets, and received him again as one of themselves. Many whom he studied with have passed away; but those who are left, and new friends, extend fraternal welcome."

"That is more than I could do," observed Weir, with refreshing candour. "Once a renegade, always a renegade."

"You do not attach virtue to the exalted quality of repentance?"
"In the matter of science, sir; in the matter of morals,

much." With what slow systematic exactness he worked on while enunciating his views. "For instance, in my case: I am a poor man, a self-educated artizan, with only one possession I value in the world; suppose you come on the pitiful pretext of a loneliness I should feel as much as yourself, and with the questionable passport of a dead friend's fancy, rob me of that one possession. Well, sir, I bear the stroke as a brave man should, with but a moment of ill-temper; still, I cannot play the hypocrite and wear a smile. You are instantly seized with regret, or any compunctious feeling you like to call it, and you honourably withdraw; then, sir, I admire your philosophy, hold out the fraternal hand to your science, and attach virtue to the exalted quality of repentance."

Saul stood square, plane and rule before him, a light in his clear, fine eyes admitting no subterfuge.

"I understand you, Mr Weir, and may win your good opinion. If I have grieved you, it has been caused by a past history I will not explain, but which, did you know in all its livid realism, would modify that scathing judgment."

"Sir, the plummet never varies; and as unvarying is true honour. I neither judge nor scathe; God knows I would rather help a man at any time; but I am open of speech, and impatient of thought. I have always been accustomed to a reckoning on the spot, and to explicit understanding. You know, when in carpenters' country, you must put up with carpenters' brusqueness;" and with a winning smile that made all right, Saul gave him his hand.

Which the other took with a courteous bow.

Then requesting that Mr Weir would excuse him to Daisy, he withdrew. Saul knew not that a heart, tender and feeling as his own, went there; even had he so known, it would not have altered the edict of his conscience, which prompted him to tell a man when he disliked his encroaching. Nevertheless Saul kept on with his work, graver than usual, for all that day.

Early next morning he took the trunk to the station, and started for Ramsgate. By the special wish of his cousin (whom to avoid confusion we will still call "Merry"), the

marriage was there to be celebrated. Merry had passed some of his pleasantest time in the town—had there first began to save and rise again in the world. He had formed many a happy fancy in that seaside Bohemia, and now one of them should there come true. Moreover, Dobson was not far off—at Canterbury—and Dobson, by virtue of an old understanding, was to give the bride away. Lily Balsam, also, would be there to see her friend made happy; not the least interested spectator of this notable wedding.

Not without some inward disturbance had Jessie committed herself to the step. Her affectionate heart would never have been brought to leave the Princess had not that royal lady herself desired it, upon the eve of departure for France, where she intended remaining in seclusion until the affairs of her country would permit her to return to the land of their birth. A pathetic farewell took place, and then at last Jessie gave herself up to "Merry" Weir for better or worse. She was very anxious concerning her father, and would have felt happier with his sanction; it troubled her so much she was inclined to entreat a further delay. He was not worth this consideration. Jessie did not go by worth, but by duty. Merry spoke of it to Saul, and he used persuasion also. Jessie knew he would never counsel contrary to right, and she consented. Her heart had been quite satisfied as to the singleness of Merry's love for her. With his own old fascinating earnestness, he assured her of this again and again, and with importunate pleading besought her to believe him—and she did so.

The immediate consequence of all this was, that the great Dobson, in a spotless white waistcoat, blue neckerchief, and the most chastely imprinted shirt-front in the world, was seen marching briskly down High Street, Ramsgate; reconnoitring the folks and looking out for the church, with the largest assurance commensurate with that sterling good sense which Mr Dobson, of DOBSON'S, especially delighted in.

It was a noteworthy sight, and attracted more attention on account of his electing to walk. The fact happened to be that Dobson, as usual, had his eye open for patronage. He carried

a little bundle of papers under his arm, and saw no cause or impediment why he should not do a stroke of business on his own account. Not to waste time, he had brought some of his bills with him. On his way to the church he handed them to the people he passed, with the flourish characteristic of his usual finished performance. There was no telling but that, under the magic enticement of his announcement, many might develop into patrons of his high-class Panorama. He had placed a Transatlantic edition of this before the public in honour of his friend's return. To it, Merry, for old association's sake, and in fulfilment of his promise, agreed to supply the lecture—the only condition being, that his friend Herrick was allowed to travel with them, to which Dobson gladly assented. And thus Merry made good his promise to the boy.

At a quiet church in a noisy thoroughfare the ceremony was to take place, and Dobson, who had a great idea of being in time everywhere, was at the door before anybody had come—ay, not even the clerk, or the inevitable old woman who, whether for use or ornament, or as representing Church and State, is habitually present. Dobson pushed up his hat on one side, looked out of the corners of his eyes over at houses opposite, and then made for the front door of the nearest, through the letter-plate of which he poked a long bill; then to the next, and so on—not forgetting the vicarage, at the door of which he was standing, when out popped the vicar. Dobson entertained great regard for the clergy; they did him good, or rather his entertainment, for Dobson did not go to church. He politely, and with the semi-circular wave acquired by long practice, put one of his bills under the vicar's nose. When the ministry were considering the passing of Dobson's bill, the complexion was apt to be rosy. As there appeared some embarrassment on this occasion, Mr Dobson improved it, by exclaiming, "I presume you belong to the church over the way? We are going to patronise you, and hope you'll do the same by us."

"Thank you, thank you," cried the divine, bustling off, very much hoping this was not the individual he was called upon to marry.

"Bother him," said Dobson, composedly; "he thinks he's coming in for nothing. Well, he hasn't a pass, and won't do it."

With placid complacency the showman walked across to the church, in time to greet Merry and Mr Edred, who, with the youthful bride and bridesmaid, were alighting from a carriage.

"Where is Saul Weir?" asked Merry, impatiently; "that confounded train can't be in to the time."

Nor was it, and fortunately as it happened. Not to disturb those at the altar, Saul took his seat at the door, and thus was the first to see approaching, a violent-looking personage, whom instinct told him was the bride's disreputable parent, and in a high state of excitement, he could see. Now was the time to exert all that authority he so marvellously exercised over his fellow-creatures. With face inflamed and passionate gesture, the man swaggered in at the porch, his hectoring bluster giving warning of the scene that was imminent. Saul hurried out, caught him by the arm, and said quickly, "I want to speak to you."

He compelled him to stop outside, where his noise would alarm no one.

"Now," said Weir, "what do you want?"

The man looked more enraged than ever at the commanding tone.

"My daughter Jes. I've been waiting till she got to the church, to serve her out for a scurvy trick she played me in London. I could have laid my hand on her afore this if I'd been so minded, but I waited until she come here"—pointing to the church. "I mean to stop that wedding."

"It has scarcely begun, so you are all in good time," said Mr Weir, coolly. "I want a word or two with you first; now, don't get excited. I've been hoping to cross paths with you for this last six months, and it will be to your interest to listen to what I am about to say. The bridegroom is a relative of mine. I value his happiness and that of your daughter, whom I respect very much; their happiness depends on the wedding you oppose. I will be plain with you, as I see that, like myself, you are a plain-dealing man; what will compensate you

for consenting to the marriage, and telling your daughter so as she leaves the church?"

The man saw that he meant no nonsense, and blurted out his ready answer: "Set me up in a Public, with stocked cellar, free of bond, and rent paid for five years."

This was the heavy father with a vengeance!

"Well," said the other, quietly, "you shall have your inn and cellar, and *one* year's rent; after that, if you are like the species, there will be no trouble to pay the second."

That he agreed to with a chuckle of satisfaction.

"Now," said Mr Weir, "stay outside till they come, then say a kind word to Jessie if you never said one before."

That pricked the man—his always uneasy conscience felt it sharply, he muttered; "I'll step round to the beer-shop at the corner, and sit down and wait."

"Go on," said Saul, glad to see the back of him.

He went into church again, taking his place amongst the small knot of people who had strolled in to see the ceremony, with a humble reverence that was infinitely beautiful.

After the ceremony, as the party were leaving the church, Jessie caught sight of her father, intolerably drunk, and quite unable to distinguish one from another of the notable people present. Making up to the lustrous Dobson, probably taken by his spotlessness, he hiccupped, "'Gratulate you, m-boy; good wife; pleased t-see both when I open. Wines, sp'rits, best quality, Lond'n port'r, skittles—for he's a jolly good fell'r!" The latter, in honour of Saul, was rendered lyrically.

This was not quite the paternal blessing Saul had bargained for. While shaking hands with Jessie and her husband, he said, "I will look after him; he was willing the wedding should go on; I suppose this is his way of celebrating it!" And with his usual kind smile he saw the party into their carriage, remarking, "Don't wait; Mr Dobson and I will join you at the hotel in a few minutes;" and as soon as they had got peacefully rid of Jessie's father, they walked on to participate in the wedding-breakfast, and make the presentation of the new trunk, which Saul had seen safely placed in their rooms at the hotel when he arrived.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SUPPRESSION OF COLEMAN DUKES.

DOCTOR JOHNSON hurried here, Mrs Doctor Johnson hurried there, and between them they excitably covered some ground. Beechester was to be stirred to its centre, the stirring process was perennially in the hands of the Johnsons, and never had they applied themselves more actively.

A new building, dignified as The School of Science and Art, and one of the ugliest of its kind, was to be opened in state.

Several attempts to get a better man having failed, the Committee fell back on the Bishop of Beechester, and a deputation waiting upon his lordship gained his affable co-operation. The Bishop knew that he was not an accomplished preacher—indeed he thought the faculty secondary; there were other men in the diocese to preach—but the Bishop did think he could make a good speech, pointed, pithy, sometimes poetical, and always practical: of course there would be branches on the line, to politics and polemics, but he was never diffusive, and always plain. The Bishop prided himself on his speeches very much.

The event occasioned great bustle. The enlightened Borough looked to its laurels. Its Science was not less important than its Literature, while both were outshone by its Art. After the opening there would be a luncheon, at which the *elite* of the neighbourhood would meet and a great gathering of *savants*. As usual at Beechester, everything was conducted with decorum. An appropriate feature, organized by Dr Johnson, was vocal music, arranged specially for the ears

of the Bishop. The melodious solos and part-songs, arranged as described, were to be rendered by a talented band of lady amateurs styled the Blue Belles of Beechester! They had the reputation of singing like angels if they did not quite look it. This unapproachable choir was trained and led by Jochebed Sneezer. They were considered (by themselves) the finest singers in the county. It was the custom of gentlemen, when at their festivals, not to look at the choir. The Bishop of Beechester was unmarried; all the Blue Belles of Beechester were unmarried. This singular coincidence was looked upon as a revelation. Thus, when Science and Art wrought their emblematic union, the see of the Bishop saw no finer prospect. If each of the Belles had been drooping almost from prehistoric times, that had nothing to do with the Bishop, who naturally would not be so fastidious as those curled darlings, the curates.

A loan collection of drawings in the lower rooms would gratify the lovers of Art; and the Mayor lent a very fine copy from the Dutch, which most people took for a cheese.

Pushed away in an ante-room, were specimens of the pupils' work, the most noticeable being a sketch of Beechester Town Hall; but owing to imperfect lighting the company took it for a cruet-stand.

In the vestibule were busts of Lord Bacon and Jonadab Sneezer, although which was Bacon and which was Sneezer could not be defined: the names were not yet placed, and the sculptor had made them both alike. Pleasing to Jonadab, who gave the busts, if not complimentary to Baron Verulam.

As this would be, in all probability, the most important event during the Johnson mayoralty, and as it was so immediately connected with all for which their town was so justly famed, the Doctor particularly desired it should pass off with distinguished *éclat*. In order that no unfortunate accident should mar its brilliance, he schemed to exclude his friend Coleman Dukes,—not out of ill-will, but through regard for the honour of the country. Doings at Beechester were canvassed wherever the English tongue was spoken, and those doings, as Coleman reported them, had acquired un-

enviable notoriety. This the Doctor devoutly wished to see remedied; the present glorious opportunity was to atone for all the past, and at the same time the great Adviser would excel in the opinion of that other great man, the Bishop.

Therefore Doctor Johnson delicately sought to secure his friend's absence. But Coleman Dukes heard of this vile manœuvre, and believing it was a scheme to present a colourable account of transactions, he felt it his duty as a conscientious citizen to be present and judge for himself. Coleman Dukes could no more lend himself to any erroneous report than he could connive at breaking into the School of Science and Art, and stealing the india-rubber. He determined to be there, unknown to the irrepressible Adviser, and make his own private shorthand report, and to forward it to the columns of the opposition print. The world would come to a standstill if truth was to be hoodwinked and verbatim reporters muzzled. If nobody would present an open account of proceedings, he would!

Nothing specially called forth Coleman's efforts until the Bishop began his speech, when Mr Dukes's pencil showed diligence. His lordship being gifted with a mumbling, muffled delivery, it added to the reporter's labour; the task of catching his words was, indeed, unpleasantly difficult. Nevertheless Coleman did his best, and if that best was not all that the Mayor and the Bishop could have desired, it was yet singularly vigorous and free from flattery.

At the set-off there was a totally mistaken and even indelicate reference to his lordship's corpulence, which, of course, he did not allude to himself. What the Bishop said, indeed, was this:

"You have conferred distinction on me, and in divers ways completed my confusion."

In its relative connection with passages preceding it there was nothing to complain of in the sentence until Mr Dukes contorted it as follows:

"You have preferred extinction of me, and in divers stays completed my profusion."

So careful, however, was Coleman about writing it down correctly, he lost the succeeding remark altogether. But he caught up that which followed with characteristic felicity—

“A retrospect is seen at brilliant tournaments ; no grumbling Whiggery would ever rouse its progress !”

This thrilling point—which, as Coleman heard, he believed a hit at Jochebed Sneezer — was thus felicitously improved upon—

“A pet of spectres seen at billiard tournaments ; no crumbling piggery should ever house this ogress !”

It was this awful blunder which ultimately led to the suppression of Coleman Dukes. A deafer man, no, not the deafest man that ever was deaf, could have perpetrated a worse piece of business if he wished to keep in favour with the ladies. Coleman Dukes did not study this so much as keeping in favour with accuracy ; he often said he would die for the truth.

But the Bishop in a highly telling manner was striking a vein of poetic thought—

“The sea-fogs on our muttery coast, remind me of those blasted oaks in yonder churchyard !”

This was Coleman’s highly telling manner of rendering the poetic—

“The pea-fogs on our buttery toast, remind me of those blasted folks in yonder churchyard !”

This poetry caused more consternation than the politics on the following day. A worse effect, however, was occasioned by Coleman’s transcript of the Bishop’s eloquent and vehement plea for reform—

“Society is torn by sedition, but a good strong wench may mend the breaches !”

Which he had the temerity to reproduce in an inconceivably vulgar translation ; judge—

“Society is torn by perdition, but a good strong wench may mend the breeches !”

What surprises one is, how the man, even if he thought he so heard, could have rested until he had compared notes with what some one else might have heard. Shortly after accomplishing this, however, he took down the remark—

“When to bridle is to lay on violence,”

which appeared in the newspaper as—

“When to bridal is to lay on violets!”

The climax was reached when the Bishop’s fine discharge—

“Both unbelievers and the ignorant must be steeped in turpitude;”

was completely spoilt by the grotesque finish of—

“Both young deceivers and the ignorant must be steeped in turpentine!”

And when the Bishop’s magnificent reference to the agricultural position of the town was marred by the most ridiculous blunder ever committed—

“In this beautiful town, where the culture of cereals goes hand in hand with art and manufacture, until it is an earthly, secure, and influential seeding-stock to the whole community.”

Mr Dukes eclipsed his former efforts, and rapped the organ of the suppressors—

“In this dutiful town, where the vulture of serials goes hand in hand with artful manufacture, until it is an earthy sewer, and influenza breeding-shock to the whole community.”

No sooner did the outrageous report appear than the town was up in arms. The offender must be found and punished. Beechester might be bumptious, but it was strictly, severely chaste, and that horrible paragraph had almost an immoral ring to it. They could not suppress the passages, since they were published, but they would take good care to suppress the writer of them. Natural instinct pointed to but one likely person—Coleman Dukes, whom, owing to his infirmity, it would be exceedingly difficult to impeach. Still it was an



urgent public necessity, and an imposing group of ultra-virtuous townsmen, comprising three of the most hardy members of the town council, rode up to the great gates of Dukes's castle, the owner whereof saw them approaching, and, struck by their martial bearing, ordered the drawbridge should be raised, and outer ballium arquebused. In other words, the good man turned totally deaf, and would hear nothing. But observing the whole neighbourhood was aroused by their tremendous knocking, and apprehensive of a riot, he at last went himself to the door, and said with innocent quietness, "Thought I heard something! Come in; how do you do?"

"We do badly," shouted the foremost, grimly.

"Sorry to hear you're sadly," Dukes shouted, as though the other had been deaf also.

"Have you seen the report in the papers this morning?" asked the angry foremost one extra loudly.

"I've sherry," responded Coleman, hospitably; "never keep port in the house; too heavy, disagrees. I have to be so very particular."

The visitor put his large mouth to Coleman's sensitive ear and discharged this thunderbolt: "You've forwarded a strong account for the paper."

Coleman mildly shook his head as though there was a mistake somewhere: "I always pay by the quarter, in advance," he replied, with a reassuring smile.

"No, no," they cried all together; and the second clamoured, "description of the meeting yesterday; it won't end there I'm afraid!"

"I paid my subscription to Jonadab Sneezer," Mr Dukes explained, amiably.

At mention of that name all shuddered. One was reminded of his snuff-box, and took a pinch, with the paw of a bear.

Then they looked at one another, it seemed nothing could be done, the man was so obstinately deaf.

The first speaker made one final attempt; he drew off his friend Dukes confidentially, and in a much lower voice said, "Great fall of stock."

Dukes pricked up his ears at that, for his pocket was interested. "Sorry to hear it," he said, in a similar confidential tone; "what are they down?"

"Stock of impudence, I mean. Haven't you seen the papers this morning?"

"I never read them," said Coleman, innocently; "they're so full of instances of imposition; it quite spoils one's good opinion of the world."

Mr Dukes left his friend who read the paper to cross over to another friend, of whom he asked if his grandmother was better.

"She did pass a calmer night, thank you; but it's more than she will do after seeing her Bishop so maligned." It was the prevailing topic; all classes were affected by Coleman's wretched delusion.

"Why, I thought he was here yesterday?" asked Mr Dukes, looking up ingenuously.

"Yes; it is just that we are exercised about," explained the third speaker in a bellicose manner. "An atrocious report of the proceedings has crept into the paper."

"I should like to see it," remarked Dukes, quietly.

They were in doubt as to its authorship after all, when a grand, a magnificent head, was put in at the door, and the irresistible Mayor gaily asked, "Anybody at home?"

All felt pleased. The Adviser always popped in when wanted.

"I've heard all about it," he said, merrily, with a coquetish wag of the head, and looking at Coleman. "You never told me you were going, though; wonderful how I find things out:" then to the others, "He has taken a house on the outskirts of London."

Coleman knew that was the Adviser's method of getting rid of him. And when Doctor Johnson circulated a rumour there was sure to be some foundation for it. "I didn't know it was necessary to consult you first," said Coleman, sharply.

"No, not necessary," said the Doctor, with a genial smile; "only I could have advised you to advantage."

"Well, I have long thought," said Mr Dukes, with dignity,

"that Beechester is scarcely on a level with my standard of thought; the great feature of the age is progressive development. Beechester does not make progress nor develop, and rather than remain at such an utter standstill I think it a sign of wisdom to make a move."

"I hope it may prove beneficial to your hearing, sir," said the first speaker.

"Change of air is eminently curative," observed the Doctor, with his charming bow. This ended it.

Coleman knew perfectly well that once the beau-gossip had decreed he should go, it was no use to oppose it. He accepted the translation with a good grace. There was much clanning together in Beechester, and when one of the petty chieftains made a raid, the only course was to subside and begin the world over again. The disadvantage of prominence in the enlightened Borough was its insecure throneship.

Fancy looking out at some window of the Coral Club and seeing a sprat lecture the shark swimming royally by; yet the grotesque impossibility would not be greater than that of the Beau of Beechester being questioned as to the dictates it was his august pleasure to issue.

Woe betide the wight who runs contra to the old established adviser to a town and neighbourhood!

CHAPTER XXX.

WITH EVENTIDE COMES REST.

SYMPATHY is the lever force of the world.

It is the glorious side of human nature which raises the gloomy side.

It possesses a mightiness whose power is best shown in that it can lift trouble. Even love without sympathy cannot do that; therefore is sympathy the grand panacea against all the ills that woman is heiress to.

Mrs Potter found in the sympathy of Rupert Redland the greatest comfort she had known for very many years.

Some people look on the world as through an old green bottle, and then wonder there are no pleasant pictures. Shift the glass, and for mercy's sake (or for the sake of other people, which is the same thing) look through a rose-coloured one for a change. Thus might Rupert have reasoned,—he always went with so cheerful a countenance, and such inspiring, animating words to that poor home.

Redland simply visited at Mrs Potter's, the Lutes', and Mr Weir's. These houses seemed to him all that any man might desire to enter until he had a home of his own. And when he recalled that these had all been opened to him within the short course of a year, he felt profoundly thankful; and he thought, "How caring seems the Hand that might have left us alone as of old, that might have overwhelmed again and again, and yet that has not; caring and sparing, in spite of perversity, to the last extreme!" Rupert possessed one of the most meek and grateful of natures;—he was essentially humble. And truly, all the learnt and unlearnt wisdom of



time may rear in its mighty bulk, but man is no more than mouse, be his cunning what it may, and his conceit imperial as his audacity.

These three homes—each so different—supplied all his need. In one, a gentle lady loved with a son's reverence; in another, a child of such exquisite feeling, the visits there were the richest in his regard; and thirdly, the ethereal Etta Lute stood forth like some good genius of his life, to guide him onward to the light. To a nature that had been enveloped in darkness from its dawn, that light represented everything.

Hitherto we have only seen the facets of Rupert's character; from the combination of circumstances he has reflected an indefinite tone which is neither just to his mental strength nor gracious to his temperament—a unique one, isolated by its rarer fineness. Rupert was not in any sense a commonplace thinker. He who accompanies his musing with an aerial harp of acute sensitiveness, is of an order totally different from those who figure in the grotesque pantomime of ordinary life. All his days he had studied a grave thing—how to make happier those who were unhappy; woven with this desire was the yearning to find happiness himself. It combined a subtle painfulness, since he had the measure of other's unrest added to his own. But there is good when those endowed with feeling touch at right angles others equally sensitive. The endeavour to cheer Mrs Potter brought him comfort also; the majestic calm of her nature, with its shadowed sorrows and infinitude of religious emotion, exerted an influence that first taught him peace. Then, common cares and ordinances were hallowed. He made of all the world benevolence, and saw beauty in all things.

A doubt which wounds the sensitiveness of penitence, the delicacy of conversion, and the purity of beneficence, is injurious to the holy dignity of religion, and an active, antagonistic ruling for the weakening of faith. A marred greeting is an aggression in the ethics of morals. The repose of confidence is the first stage in the allegiance of the heart. Confidence in those who appeal to the soul should be the product of instinct, not of calculation. And as Rupert brought to Mrs Potter's

heart the first delight it had known since troubles began, she gave to him in return a motherly tenderness the like of which had never blessed his life. We would not forget that the weird trail of days, result of the unnatural, unlovely bringing up by Oliver Redland, had much to do with his peculiar organization. Such character repays analysis,—it is like new literature of the soul. Depths of unsuspected beauty, powers of rarer texture, weaknesses of greater crookedness, suffering with a finer edge. Tenderness that is made a business of, grim, systematic and mathematic, was of no use to him, and he would rather be without it. He wanted such as he gave, spontaneous, richly luxuriant as only impetuous, spontaneous tenderness can be. The man and the philanthropist are two, with dividable sympathies and sorrows; the one refines the penalties of humanity and takes all the care that the other may work unfettered.

Of old time, when sick to death of the forlorn garret with its noxious experiments, and all the drear discomfort the alchemist had been wont to gather around him, the nephew, with that fantastic, unreal, visionary method of his, had reared for himself a home: true, it was of the baseless fabric of which dreams are made, but to it he had looked with a dim longing that, girt in by dirty walls, was exceedingly pathetic. In the country—somewhere, anywhere, so it were in the country! A white-walled cottage, draped in honeysuckle, and a porch wreathed with the sweet clematis; around, a sheaf of rose-trees, fragrant lavender, and the tender bloom of apple-trees. He had often told Daisy of this; once tremblingly told her of how, on a grey night beside the Thames, he had imagined the lattice above the honeysuckle framing her own little face. Told her, and thought no more of having done so; but Daisy told Saul, and Saul did not forget. Only a day or two after his rough rejoinder, he found some such pretty place near Ramsgate; it was in the full flush of its summer beauty, was all that a lover of nature and of quiet could have wished, was the very abode for a student, and the very place for Rupert. It was to be sold furnished, plainly, cleanly, and Saul thought reasonably.

He bought it, had Daisy down to look at it, and told her who it was for. The child burst into tears: the act moved her. It was indeed superbly done. Then Saul wrote Redland to meet him there on business—next day, if possible. Of course Rupert obeyed the summons at once, wondering whatever it meant. He had a dry, dusty walk from Ramsgate; the sun hot above, the ground parched below; but anon he came to a vale, shady and cool; he thought it deliciously so, and felt disposed to sit down by the wayside to rest. Jogging on, thinking he could have remained in the odorous arcadia for ever, he was brought to a standstill; before him uprose the cottage of his musing. He stood gazing with delight, envying the happy fellow who dwelt there. At a window he saw a child, framed in by the clustering creeper; it was Daisy, and it so perfectly realised the picture foreseen, he deemed it an illusion, and looked around to discover his whereabouts, it was all so uncertain. There was no illusion, for strong Saul Weir came forward to meet him, and *his* presence, while it dispelled doubt, always insured belief. He had a parcel in his hand, it looked like a book carefully done up in brown paper.

Before entering the house Saul took the young man a walk round the garden, to admire the roses, smell the lavender, and speculate concerning the apple crop.

There was something else. Becoming exceedingly serious, he quietly unloosened the string of the parcel, remarking, "Do you remember doing our dead friend a service in a certain shop one day?"

He handed him the volume of Burns's Poems preserved to poor Archie by Rupert in the pawnbroker's shop at King's Cross. Redland became hot, then palely cold; he inclined his head, with great sadness at the recollection. Saul Weir continued: "A day or two ago I spoke slightly of his wishes; I would now do more justice to them. He wished you well out of smoky London, and in a pretty country-house of your own. Here it is, Mr Redland! You are invited to accept it free of liability. I cannot leave you the picture framed in your honour, but all else is yours."

Thus saying, with his kindest smile, Saul gracefully waved his hand in the direction of the entrance, inviting the young man to follow him inside; and Saul stepped quickly into the pretty breakfast-parlour, to relieve him of uttering the expressive gratitude trembling on his tongue. Rupert was indeed powerfully affected, and he could but think how he was mistaken in this man of plain speech. Saul Weir's character gave him the idea of one of massive creation, solid as though cut from rock, and shaped with difficulty to the human, the tender, the sentient. "Were he to write," thought Rupert, "his pen would cleave and purify, rather than melt and move!" He slowly followed his friend into the house.

Rupert would only accept such goodness upon a condition denoting equal goodness in himself. He told them of Mrs Potter and her trials, the heroism she had shown in her struggle with adversity. Great was their surprise upon hearing of Daisy's old friends in this way; that it should be through Mr Redland, did, indeed, seem passing strange.

"Yes; and that is not all," said Redland, with frank confession. "*They* taught me to love you first." He described about the pencil drawing, and repeated the kind words used. "And now," he went on, "if I am really to occupy this charming place, let Mrs Potter come and keep house for me; it will be as great a pleasure to know that she is provided with a comfortable home, as it will to find myself so congenially sheltered."

"The very thing I could have wished!" said Mr Weir, in his usual handsome manner: and again did Daisy look her intense gratitude. What would not Saul have done to provoke that happy look! Some people seem born to create such happiness; and it is a very fortunate dispensation, since it helps to balance the evil done.

There are so many delicate emotions, and tender, beautiful thoughts conveyed in beneficence which cannot be expressed in any other form, that we feel thankful we possess this mode of receiving or imparting these finer sentiments.

"Oh, it will be splendid!" exclaimed Daisy, looking

around with delight, thinking of how soon Mrs Potter would feel at home, of her love for a garden, her fondness for pets.

The great Peter Paul would have no pets in his house at any time—he sneered at such sentimental nonsense—and destroyed the one creature upon earth that loved the wife he tyrannized over. The “manly” type of husband which sneers at a wife for keeping pets, may generally be suspected of keeping something worse. Give such wide berth, for that cold complaint, the Sneer, is very catching.

So the three set themselves arranging matters for the comfort of Mrs Potter and her daughters. It was agreed that Rupert should broach the proposal, and aid in their removal. And having settled it all in such a way as must delight their absent friends, they partook of luncheon.

Rupert mentioned Archie's poems, and his gladness at the reception accorded the book.

“Dubious at first,” said Saul. “It was received with a surprised hush. Man would not commit himself with fellow-man upon opinion; those so ready at tripping were reserved and silent; and while the doctors were deciding, the public, by a novel innovation, decided in its own mind that neither head nor tail was to be made out of his writings. This was the situation when the more cultured and thoughtful minority declared in its favour. Then by degrees it dawned that an addition to the ranks of literature of considerable worth was before the world, and this challenged attention as no book had done for years. There was a prodigious reaction, a tremendous run upon the book; and now Archie Campbell's name is in everybody's mouth. Deservedly so. For if called a mannerist, or any other term expressing as much and meaning as little, he is impervious to all that clamour now, and his poems depend on their own intrinsic merit alone.”

“There died one of the gentle and loving poets, whom it was honour to call friend; like death to lose.” As tender-hearted Rupert with a tremulous voice paid this tribute to the memory of his friend, his earnestness seemed to draw Saul nearer to him. “His name,” continued Rupert, “may

not be in our biographies—he may be unknown and unmourned; but when he died, possibly with the shred of a song on his lips, certainly with the light of a higher poetry in his eye, when the heart beat its last measure and the rhythm of that soul was at an end, there passed away one whom it is difficult to forget, whom we must always wish with us still.”

Their conversation, although in praise of her dead friend, was so painful to Daisy that she left the room, and went out into the garden, sunny and sweet, to think about those who were coming there to live. She very soon lost the feeling of depression.

“He suffered so much,” said Rupert, after she had gone, “that one feels a heart beat in every poem, each line a pulsation, each idea the breathing out of his life. He might not have, perhaps, possessed exalted genius——”

“Stay, sir,” Saul interrupted him with emphasis. “Is it no sign of exalted genius to make a standpoint and to keep the ground—to strike the pick in new soil and keep the claim? His ballads will yet be loved and sung in his own land where the people live lives of ballad and of song, a people who will one day be proud of the youthful poet who has made their classic land more classic. But now, I have completed my purpose in being here; these are the keys of possession (handing them); I hope you may be very happy; you will find the quietude acceptable for your studies after the distraction of London.”

It might have been an echo of longing for some such little place himself (he loved the country fully as well), or some passing emotion, the voice was vibratory and the hand trembled for one brief moment while he said “Good-bye!” Then he and Daisy went quickly on their way.

And if the aim of this goodness was to create happiness for Redland it was perfectly successful; he had never felt so happy in his life before. “I have to thank you for this, Archie,” he said aloud, with grateful warmth.

And this retired spot was thenceforth the home of Mrs Potter, from which she never went again. Her sad diffi-

culties were over, thanks to this son-like protector, whose highest pleasure was to make her peacefully at rest. Late in the day, it came when most required.

Three of her daughters obtained congenial positions in comfortable homes, through Rupert's instrumentality. Miss Potter remained with her mother, and appreciated the retirement as much as did any one.

Mr Redland was sometimes visited by Theodore Lute; once he brought his sister. Not a word of love had ever passed between Rupert and Etta, but they knew it was there engrafted—broken in upon but never broken off; and when Etta saw the student in the midst of his simple pleasures, saw his devotion to learning, understood the sensitive beauty of character which made him so unlike to others, and, above all, witnessed that gracious trait, his deference to the aged lady, then Etta went away feeling how very much nicer than a villa near London may be a cottage far distant.

When the first blush of love appeared upon the horizon, a pink and delicate cloud no bigger than her pretty pink hand, her life seemed to gather up new meaning, the dainty song-time took full musical proportion, and there was something more to live for than the tending of roses. The exquisiteness of her purely exquisite nature assumed tone, colour, definiteness. It dawned upon her that life was not to be all tender reverence for a mother and adoring admiration for a brother. Friendship between Rupert and Theodore Lute was of old standing, and the brother encouraged the attachment. From all he knew of Rupert he felt certain he would make his sister very happy, and Rupert, he knew, could have found no wife who would enter more sympathetically into his peculiarly sensitive nature. Beneath the nettles of Rupert's life, below the vexed pain of sting and heat from poverty and hardship, there had beat a grander feeling; so deep it would never be found without searching for, yet swifter, brighter than steel. Theodore's refined perception long ago detected it, he spoke of it to Etta, and she had dwelt on this. It did not feed her love, it consecrated it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SOLEMN EVENTS IN THE HOUSE OF TOMKINS.

PEPPER-and-salt-coloured nurses moved about with soft catlike tread, and a mourning cast of features. The three Brothers Tomkins had caught cold simultaneously; same time and same manner, on that night of the expedition. Their malady increased, developing itself equally upon each sufferer, and the Brothers Tomkins shivered and sneezed in parallel rows. To be companionable, they slept all in one room, in three beds of corresponding length and position. They were all similarly hoarse; each throat was sore to the same extent to an inch; each keen Tomkins' eye watered alike to a drop; there was inflammation, too, maintained at the same degree. The medical man needed only to prescribe for one, the same treatment answered for the other two. They were not frightened, only anxious as to which would die first, so that the survivors might appropriate the property. They were inwardly satisfied one or more of them would be removed, either as a sacrifice to appease the great god Catarrh, or in acknowledgment of their services to the church, after the school of martyrs. There was no doubt that they were very bad, so bad they could hardly lift their long heads alternately to see how the others were getting on, or if they were near going off! It was a moving sight to watch those dear, patient sufferers, in line, alternately bobbing up a long white cap to see if a beloved brother was meekly passing away. If the beloved brother looked a little more lively, the one watching was seized with a disappointed croaking, and then they all croaked together. Their

slumber was troubled, what with having to keep one eye open to see that the others did not tamper with the medicine, and the great disturbance from the snuffing. The demure domestics were quietly, incessantly busy; and while one prepared continuous hot potions, the other in a clear, solemn voice, read the Athanasian Creed to her sick masters. The road was some distance from the front of the house, but they had tan spread down to let all Ipswich know that the Brothers Tomkins lay a-dying. The prayers of the faithful would not be in the way, and cost nothing. Blinds were drawn down; they were not dead, but felt to be very near it, and desired to excite quivering apprehension in the town, imagining, with a chuckle, the consternation at the news. And they hugged the linseed closer, as they thought of the walk up the church if ever they got better. There was an open mystery connected with their illness they could not unravel; it was why and how *they* came to be seized with it instead of that marauding ruffian at the bridge. But then, bethinking them how superior to a gross and earthly type they were, how of almost celestial organization, they accepted the penalty as a chastening tribute to their goodness. Still as they did not get better, but rather worse, with more acute pains at the back, and more positive tightness at the front, they thought there must be some mistake: it was all very well for them to have sufficient disorder to arouse the sympathy of Ipswich, if not of England, but to suffer to that severe personal extent was quite out of their reckoning. They did not improve matters by telling the doctor at his first visit that he need not trouble to call again; they did so for economy, and only sent for him in the first instance to learn what was the matter with them. But when they became worse, and matters looked more serious, they did have in the solicitor, to arrange their affairs in case of anything happening; and it was edifying to see the man of law whispering with each in succession. Amongst other things, Mr Adam whispered, "I don't think I am quite so bad as my poor brothers; be in readiness if I send for you."

Mr Adam's anxiety had indeed been stimulated by the lamentable condition of his two brothers.

Towards evening their pains increased;—they kept up an intolerable groaning, one against another.

"How do you do now, Brother Seth?" asked Adam, with commiseration, sitting up a little way, leering across.

"Oh, worse, worse, dear brother!" deplored Seth, with a lachrymose glance at the resuscitated head of the house.

"You have indeed gone through an ordeal, brother."

"I knew I was not long for this world," murmured Seth with difficulty.

"It is for your good, dear brother," corrected Noah, sneezing.

"Yes," assented Seth with a diabolical look, burying his head under the clothes. Presently he turned up again. "Oh! Oh! Oh!" was all he could moan.

Adam was busy calculating what he would gain by Seth and Noah being taken, but he left that to spring up in bed at the sound of Seth's awful groaning, and to look eagerly in his direction. He placed a hand on the pillow, eagerly scanning Seth, as he believed this terrible groaning must be the signal of departure. His brother's cadaverous face was convulsed, the features twitched with simultaneous action, the slender frame was shaken, and the others shook too; for Noah also had raised himself, leaning a hand on his pillow, and staring with as greedy intentness as did Adam. They heard poor Brother Seth once more moan, saw him give a convulsive spring of the heel, a little jerk, a reverent kick, and—they knew that all was over.

In a moment the other two slipped out of bed, one each side of Seth, and, like jackal undertakers, they laid him straight—more in symmetry with their old established straightness—more in etiquette with a dead Tomkins. Adam felt under his pillow to discover if any valuables were there hidden. Then over the body they clasped each other's hands, bobbed their nightcaps close, and whispered, "We now see the consequences of any departure from strict moral rectitude. It is evident that conduct on the part of our beloved Seth impaired the purity of our union as a Brotherhood."

They glided back into bed, for Noah had come over

horridly cold. "I have taken a chill," he said; "I ought not to have got out."

To revive him, Adam, in a hoarse voice, read the Burial Service over Seth.

Before another half-hour poor Noah also lay *in extremis*. Adam could scarcely believe in the possibility of such a bereavement, such a complete loss to the Tomkins Family, and he watched with avidity, not saying anything lest he broke the thread of Noah's transition. And there was heard similar terrible groaning, "Oh! Oh! Oh!" when Adam sprang up with extra compassion. Noah's pallid features were working in the same fearful manner, his fragile form was agitated, and Adam was agitated too; for he saw his sole surviving brother give one convulsive spring of the heel, a little jerk, a reverent kick, and—then he knew that all was over.

The House of Tomkins arose and clothed himself.

After this removal of his lamented brothers, it would be sin to lie longer. He must bestir himself, if only out of Christian decency, and forget his woe in seeing to their interment.

He sent one of the girls in haste for the solicitor, receiving him in the adjoining bedroom. A desk was brought up, and, under the sorrowful circumstances, they did pretty well at computation.

The candle left burning in the chamber of sickness shone dim in the solemn air, throwing off sparks in protest at the ghostly silence. The three beds, those outstretched forms, the gloomy corners of the room, all presented a weird and grim effect.

Precisely at the same time, the right eye of one dead man and the left eye of the other dead man opened, and out of the corners thereof the deceased took note of Brother Adam's bed being vacated. Their nightcaps bobbed at an exact angle as each raised a ghostly head to look inquiringly at one another. Then they asked together, "And you are still living, dear brother?" both nodding confirmatory at the same moment. They tumbled out of bed and met fraternally in the middle of the room, and saying together "We shall

catch him now" they linked arms, and just as they were marching out of that room into the next, surprised Mr Adam and his friend at preparations for their economical obsequies.

Mr Adam, with severity, said, "This is an imposition. You have no business to be about."

"Yes, brother, we have; when the lawyer is."

And with quite sardonic pleasantry for one with so bad a cold, Mr Seth bowed to the solicitor. Adam thought the bobbing of those spotless nightcaps very like a fiendish pantomime. It really seemed no use providing for these irrepressible brothers if they were to set all the laws of nature at defiance in that way. "I will not ask you to explain, Brother Seth," he said, sadly; "I can only assure you I was doing my duty by you, and arranging a retirement from this earthly scene in a manner creditable to a Tomkins."

"We are sure of it, dear brother, and if we postpone dissolution it is only to grant you the precedence due to you as our elder;" and with ironical civility each again bobbed his nightcap, while they linked arms, then with elastic grace they returned to their bedroom.

"It is rather unfortunate we discontinued the doctor's services," observed Adam, irritably; "we should then possibly have been spared this flippant and indecent survival."

The solicitor bowed in polite professional acknowledgment of the *opprobrium medicorum*. "I believe," he said, in a manner intended to be complimentary, "that a Tomkins is long-lived. It will be a distant day when the Family is forgotten. Yours are not ordinary existences: they merit——"

"Immortality!" said Mr Adam, rising with an ecstatic spring and locking his desk.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CROWNED WITH ROSEBUDS.

MERRY, under his altered circumstances, found travelling about with Dobson to be vastly pleasant—unlimited money and unfettered liberty; everybody very kind, and the public like a bosom friend. Saul heard of it, and sympathised with his relative's feelings, but far more so with those of Jessie, and for her sake he wrote Merry a fraternal recommendation to settle down. Merry took it in good part, placed his own likings unselfishly aside and considered the matter. His young wife did indeed dislike and feel weary of such roaming, pleasant and healthful though it might be. It was very agreeable, no doubt, to see the country, stop at genteel hotels, and generally travel in comfort; but this was not like being at home, and she timidly told him of her yearning for rest. Then Merry, like the good-natured fellow he was, said, "I'll throw up the life, which I only returned to out of goodwill to Dobson. Now where would you like to live, dear? I have decided in my own mind!"

"London?"

"Good gracious, no! Unless it's at Kew. I want to get far away from it. But let me tell you this idea of mine; rather a brilliant one, I fancy." The handsome husband tossed his curls back laughingly.

"I propose to buy the Hermitage at Meadowford: it is for disposal. You will be in a familiar home, one you love, and I—shall be near a nursery, to say nothing of the garden which goes with the house—a very nice piece of ground indeed. In my opinion we should be happy enough there."

The dash with which this was said provoked her smiles; but she became grave and thoughtful afterwards.

"I know what you are troubling about, Jessie. Do not fear, my girl; gold and goodness have effectually reformed me. I promise to have no eyes for any one but Mrs Root, and her man Benjamin! She must look to her laurels. I am going to begin gardening upon the most verdant scale imaginable."

Her thoughts were like the swift flight of flitting swallows. Still she had the reassurance that Lily was her friend, and was worthy of that friendship. She gave a gentle assent to his project, and Merry went off singing a verse of one of his classics:

"Old Grimes is dead,—that good old man,—
We ne'er shall see him more:
He used to wear a long black coat,
All buttoned down before."

His pretty wife remained a long while pensive. There is many a thorn without a rose, but Jessie devoutly hoped none such would grow in their garden. The quailing timidity in her splendid eyes ought never to have been there, but she had suffered so much in her day that dread had left its shadow for all time. It is not wonderful, seeing *how* we suffer, that a lifetime will in anxious moments flash before the eyes.

Merry acquainted Dobson with their decision, and he could not feel surprised.

"I shall look in on you sometimes," he said, gratefully. His regard for the whilom lecturer was very cordial. Business was brisk, the Panorama drawing good houses, and Dobson had never been in a warmer glow of satisfaction. Merry was a favourite everywhere, his style pleased, his musical voice was admired (he did not sing his classics in public), his freshness and piquant brilliancy took with all; it was dramatic, but the drama of comedy; and highly graceful. The majority of audiences are not influenced by artistic finish and point, but Merry led his hearers up to an appreciation of the telling, epigrammatic style of which he was the master. There seemed truth in Dobson's remark: "The most accomplished lecturer in this country goes into private life with your retire-

ment, Mr Tattergast!" Dobson stuck to his favourite name through thick and thin.

Saul's motto, that a life is not crowned by its dreams, but by its work, Merry could not subscribe to. He was going to enjoy roseate dreaming amidst his graceful roses; happy in secluded retirement, with a fairer rose than them all; on that account he welcomed retirement, for

"The rose that all are praising
Is not the rose for me,"

he would sing.

Merry had never been a lover of money, indeed his unsophisticated history went to prove that he had always tried how fast he could get rid of it; but it had always been in taking his pleasure, and he now developed from a careless spendthrift into a careful, homely country gentleman, of unbounded good temper and amiability. The profuse munificence of Saul took him wholly by surprise; he excused himself to his conscience from imitating it, by saying, "The public have had so much of my money, I am going to begin to keep some for myself" It was not said aloud to his wife, but she noticed with rapture that he was as saving as when he used to bring her the week's wages, minus only the price of a flower.

Saul's abnegation was utter and complete indeed; for when, finally, he added to his good works provision for life for Ada Sylvester, he stood up as before, master in his own shop, and of nothing beyond it. This was his design: to preserve not one penny-piece unto himself of all that splendour. He would say, "As long as my head is clear, my heart clean, and my hand strong, and I have this good treasure which God has given me" (laying a hand tenderly on Daisy's head) "I want no more."

The Meadowford people did not hurry themselves even when setting forth to gossip,—thus it was some little time before it was known that the new owner of the Hermitage had money; but when that most important fact was circulated and guaranteed, the town conveniently forgot its previous bad opinion

of him, and really remembered to have detected something distinguished in his bearing.

The numerous traders sent in business cards, enclosed in business envelopes, "With our compliments, soliciting your favours." Some called personally, and were taken aback by his coolly pleasant reception of them. Merry good-naturedly gave them all encouragement; dealt with the people in turn, and did not buy half his requirements in London. But nothing was ever quite right in Meadowford. They said he gave them the idea of having "sprung from the ranks. He certainly did assume composure, but it was plainly to disguise his want of manners, which would so soon be detected," and so on.

Finally, settled in their quiet home, Jessie knew happiness and peace. There was a flower-clustered barrier between her husband and the world.

He might have been king of the fruits and flowers, so sunny was his nature. And he who had spent glorious noons in foreign vineyards, idled hours away in his orchard, making of it a domain of fruit and song. When golden light died in the western sky, when the perfume of fruits was subtle, when a depth of blue was lying beyond the apple-trees, there came back to him the memory that was like a page in some old picture-book, quaint, passionate, musicful. No more than a cameo of youth, small, brief, and beautifully cut; the spoilt loveliness of dim pleasure-days, chased in a figure by the huntress Pain; graven imperishably deep in colour-stone by a swift experience; seen in the distance now, and no more than the Roman splendour of a toy, half dream, half jewel—a toy of a dull dead glitter, with a snapt charm. Remembrance of when he bartered his happiness in Ghent, and out-rivalled old Counts of Flanders in his ardour of devotion. He loved well at that day, and deserved more honourable usage.

Finer mettle was never displayed than back in the old-world Continental town where his heart was slain: when he forgave. Chivalrously as he had loved, in the one passionate dream of his life. In his orchard, amongst Nonpareils and

Pippins, in the resplendent yet tender light of summer evenings, those days came back to him ; they had lost their cruel witchery, but would never lose their pain. There is a complete scale of conduct in people's method of accepting disappointment ; at that day he thought, "Give me all the sunshine in the world, and I will gladly give up all the love ;" instead of becoming a morose and selfish wanderer, he went in search of the sunshine everywhere, and his nature absorbed it literally. Wherever he went he gladdened the city ways, and made them thrill like the woods with song. Traditions of the cities spoke home to him with cynical suggestiveness ; the men and women who had kinged and queened it for the hour, with all their loves and hates, and all the dressed-up sins and shames of history, had been but so many puppets and pictures that had passed away : but nothing embittered he said, "I would change with the merriest of them." On the grass, while grass and trees were musical with motion of a fragrant wind, while lazily watching the race and chase of the flying clouds and the play of light and shade, it seemed to him like the history of his life. Events of momentous importance turn upon small alternatives ; at that time thus looked back upon, he accepted Bohemianism pure and simple ; "And now see what it has brought me !" he thought, with a complacent smile ; "a pretty little wife, and a pretty large fortune !" He conferred approval upon himself at will, "While others worked for wealth I journeyed to it."

His garden, however, afforded him the chief delight. There he revelled in an easy-chair, surrounded by the theatrical journals, in the midst of a trellised sanctum, gorgeous with Boursault roses ; his young wife standing by, decking his brow with ducal honours from the choicest of their buds. "Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered," he would say lightly, quoting from the Wisdom of Solomon, and looking up in her face well pleased. And her beaming smile made a golden picture of it.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BEAVERS RETIRE TO THEIR LODGE.

PHINEAS BEAVER—that genial retired tradesman, speculator, and artful inventor—suffered in purse more than in feeling by the collapse of his operations. He was considerably out of pocket, and he swore at his staff all round, but jocularly called himself to order, and, in characteristic style, set about remedying it. To the great relief of Hackney, he changed his quarters, took to the woods and streams, opened a house of call for anglers and others near Lea Bridge, and styled it the Beavers' Lodge.

Here he passed an *al fresco* existence greatly to his liking; and Phineas junior, serving behind the bar, was more at home than he had been for a very long time. Although the son's vapidness was rather in the way of the undertaking, it was counteracted by the jocoseness of the sire. Beavers' Lodge became patronised by the *élite* of East London—a Sunday rendezvous of the Whitechapel gentry, and followers of the manly sport of bird-catching. Daughters of Terpsichore from the east sipped their tea in the arbours of Beaver Lodge pleasaunce. The owner did all that he could to make the place attractive to his patrons—engaged harp and violin, and a vocalist (who warbled gustily in return for his refreshments); rats, ferrets, martial chanticleers, cocoa-nuts, rifle-gallery, and views calculated to convey prejudiced ideas of the classics. The proprietor's ingenious brain hit upon another enterprise—that of founding an order, to be called THE UNITED BROTHERHOOD OF JOLLY GOOD FELLOWS—and it would, he thought, carry down the president's name to posterity. Beaver was a firm advocate for con-

vivial fraternity, and organized the new society as a much-wanted institution. The emblems of the community were to be crossed pipes and a pewter-can; and he incorporated the dignified sign in the rules. It was to be especially an association of fellowship: company would not be less than companionship, nor companionship be more than company. There was to be glorious equality, and no man would be enrolled unless eligible for joining the Jolly Good Fellows. And Beaver was proud of his scheme, trotted round fussily explaining it, and said, "If there's anything on earth more noble than a jolly good fellow, bring it for'ards, and I'll chuck up the club; but you know there ain't." Not a select association, it riotously bore out the founder's purpose, and realised jollity and noise. From quiet Houghton Regis in Bedfordshire, where the Lea rises, to below the East India Docks, where it falls into the Thames, from all Stratford to West Ham, there was not a more uproarious assembly of revellers. But after all, Beaver was not a bad sort (which he should not be, as chairman of so cheery a meeting), and he soon started a fund for the orphans of the Jolly Good Fellows: and with time it thrived. He was careful never to broach the matter of subscriptions until his Fellows were exceptionally jolly—which he took to be equivalent to being exceptionally good. Then Beaver would talk direct and with feeling: "Fellow-equals,—the glorious movement we have started—which we every week celebrate—would be wanting in humanity did we forget the orphans.—I'll trouble you for the baccy, brother Baitworm.—I beg of you to consider those we work for, who occupy the proud position of being our children. Let us remember, when supporting one another, that we are called upon to support them. My boy Phineas will go round with the money-box in aid o' the orphans!"

This performance being often repeated, a nice little sum accumulated, which the president looked after and designed exclusively for that interesting orphan, Phineas.

As patrons increased, Beaver added to the attractions of the Lodge. Pigeon-shooting, raffles, dancing on a crystal platform, jumping in sacks, pigs with greasy tails, and other artistic diversions. The entertainments took the form of a fair

in which there was plenty of fun ; and when the spirited lessee finished off with fireworks, the fame of the gardens extended wide. After one of these pyrotechnic displays, he waited upon his patrons with a pitiful story indeed. A falling rocket-stick had damaged the eyesight of one of his men. It was dark : the crowd could not say such a thing had not happened ; the beaming compassion of the pleader took due effect, and contributions tumbled in. By such fertile methods did the man of feeling enlarge the reserve for Phineas.

In consequence of his unceasing hilarity, the landlord of Beavers' Lodge was voted the very jolliest good fellow that ever rapped a table with a hammer. Altogether, he felt to have moved in the right direction, and one worthy of his unequalled powers of entertainment. His audaciousness did not diminish with increase of business, as many quiet-going ones in the neighbourhood were ready to testify. They let him alone, however, for the majority of the frequenters of the place were too rough to interfere with.

In spite of multifarious engagements connected with catering for the public, Beaver had eyes open for extraordinary and more rapid methods of making money. He ordered boats of a boat-builder, moored them by the river, and let them out by the hour. He secured a tract of the marshes, which he used for grazing, at so much a-head. He organized excursions to Epping Forest, Broxbourne, and the Rye House ; waggonettes started from the Lodge, and great was the exuberance. He introduced archery to the Lea Bridge aristocracy ; but owing to an arrow from a bow drawn by Phineas penetrating the window of a house behind him and forcibly marking the *prima donna* domestic of that neighbourhood, this portion of the paternal enterprise was abandoned. He kept dogs for coursing on the Essex marshes, and derived profit from the entries—to say nothing of the stakes. He erected a pavilion, engaged a competent master from Lambeth, who gave lessons in swimming at five o'clock in the morning. He introduced an American bowling saloon, billiards, single-stick, wrestling, pedestrianism, trotting matches, skittles, and a Temple of the Oracle, to which came all the damsels from far

and near, to have their fortunes told. And he shortly after this converted the Temple to further lucrative use, of which more anon.

Out of all these things Beaver made money, and joined in everything himself, taking a hand whether he understood it or not; cheating where he could; generally winning; and if he happened to lose, running off, saying he was wanted in the bar.

And he enjoyed it all amazingly—thought it like beginning life again; and was so inoculated with pleasure, that at last he decided to spend upon himself the reserve he had intended for that unhappy wretch Phineas.

He was like a humming-top that would never cease spinning—a whirling, red-faced humming-top.

A blithe Jack-o'-lantern of Essex marshes, in twenty places at once, but never to be found by any one wanting money.

His great brain suddenly devised a premier plan for drawing the populace: he engaged an aeronaut to make an ascent from his grounds. The project answered, crowds flocked to the gardens—even Phineas had to turn out to assist at the tea.

It was worth the shilling charged for admission to see Beaver's antics around the balloon.

Owing to an accident, and before they were ready, the balloon broke from the grapnels. Beaver grasping the car to check it was borne up, contrary to calculation. He had just time to clamber ecstatically into the car, and gaze beamingly down on the bilious-looking, horror-stricken face of his boy Phineas. The balloon careered as with joyous excitement at its liberty, and the Beaver careered with it. He was far from sharing the apprehensions of those below. The spectators thought to see that swinging, swaying, roundly roseate voyager descend like an apple at a lecture upon gravity. But it was, if anything, rather in the Beaver's way of travelling; and he determined he would turn it to account if ever he came down. The Lodge could have had no better advertisement. He would engage the aeronaut for the following Saturday; providing, of course, he had returned within that time from wherever he was bound for. Beaver looked upon it as the

most successful exploit of his direction. He had far too great faith in the buoyancy and elasticity of his cork-like self to quake at the termination, and he anticipated an amount of public prominence calculated to make a celebrity of him. He had never felt so elevated in his life before, nor so entirely above the unspeculative races. Quite happy, he would have cracked jokes with the stars had they shone upon him. Of the two, the vessel conveying him would in all probability be exhausted first. Ordinary mortals might have turned giddy and fallen out; but if only from sheer obstinacy he would never do that—it was contrary to his principles ever to fall out. Such rapid rising in the world was quite of a piece with his notions of doing business. He felt the more volatile the higher he mounted. As it became hazier below, it grew colder above. “I’ll swear I’ve been to the moon,” said he. “But I wish there were refreshments; the firmament will never be complete for travellers without.” One against another knocked his short plump legs, while he unblinkingly stared at the setting sun, indifferent to the approach of night. As he sailed above London, he thought affectionately of the city in which he had made his money, although not enough so to leave his balloon to return to it. He did not think with the same degree of affection of his friend the aeronaut. “I won’t pay that fellow a farthing for his services, and I’ll threaten to sue him for a hundred pounds damages if he refuses to pay me fifty as compensation!” He kicked about violently, in excitement, and to warm himself; so doing he disarranged the valve, and the balloon began to descend and the earth gradually to approach it. A sheen of light that seemed to warm him lay out beneath, then a map of star-like gas-lamps, bright immediately below, and dim in the distance. The balloon fell with comparative swiftness, and much the Beaver wondered where to; he did hope not upon the Metropolitan Railway. No; it was upon a quiet, a sacred spot, private and poetic—the back-garden of two retired elderly maiden ladies, with terrible notions concerning black cats and the Evil One, and wholesome horror of aught in the way of nightly visitants. They were given to gazing at the heavens

with rapt and pensive awe, murmuring with romantic emotion florid passages from Milton and Dante. They were thus plaintively looking up at the peaceful and happy stars when the strange and awful spectacle of a something descending, as it seemed to them, from the clouds, caused those hearts by the oriel to cease their fluttering. "It is a fallen angel!" hastily whispered one, closing the lattice. "It may be Lucifer himself!" twittered the other, drawing the curtain. If the Beaver did not answer to either description, he was a sufficiently dangerous being to justify their tremulousness; in that brief instant he nodded with the vulgar assurance of Bacchus himself. The gloomy cloud, as they believed the balloon to be, was resting on a tree which shaded that side of the house. Thus disagreeably placed, Beaver let himself down as quickly as possible, and alighted upon the lawn with plump nicety. He resolved he would plant an oak in memory, to be named after his boy Phineas. The garden was bound by a wall. He was a particularly bad hand at clambering walls, and seeing a light at one of the lower windows of the house which was a little way open, he pushed it up and stepped into the kitchen. Amazonian *embonpoint* of a cook brandishing a rolling-pin, the receding form of a policeman, who disappeared within a cupboard, and a frightened housemaid clinging to a warming-pan, was the tableau which met the Beaver's appreciative discovery. But when the cook uttered the war-cry, "A housebreaker!"—when, moreover, the sound of their mistress's approach was heard, the officer stepped briskly forward and seized the unfortunate Beaver by the collar, exclaiming, "I've got you at last, have I?" When the ladies saw the service thus rendered by the constable, they handed him half a sovereign for his timely protection. Without knowing the queer character he was trotting into notoriety, the policeman marched him some little distance, when Beaver, thinking he had gone far enough, said coolly, "I'll trouble you for that half-sovereign, or else to accompany me back to the house for a little explanation." His love for the police was deep-rooted: he had made them his study as a species of the order Carnivora, especially de-

serving of every honest inquirer's examination. The officer preferred the former course, and Beaver, who made money out of everything, went off chuckling, to improve his geography. He found he had descended upon Stoke Newington, and with excitable skipping along the streets he found his way to the nearest station, where he took the train back to Lea Bridge. "Think I'll make something out of it," said he to himself. And so he did. Reaching his establishment shortly after ten, while yet the pleasures and amusements were in full swing, he stole round by a grotto, off which he broke a quantity of pieces, filling his pockets with them, thence to the Temple of the Oracle, the old woman of which he sent to announce his return to earth. And she was to say, that in consequence of the pressure of the crowd he had taken refuge in the Temple, and those who choosed could enter on payment of half-a-crown, each person passing the turnstile would receive a small piece of planet! There was a rush instantly to the place, and Beaver made money as fast as he could take it. The description was characterised by the particular want of veracity in which this artless person delighted, and had not his patrons witnessed it they must have discredited the story; but having so done, it was quite impossible to say where he had been or whom he had seen. Thus, when he depicted two young and beauteous spirits as looking out of a lattice in the moon, the assertion was left unchallenged, because no man was in a position to deny it; and the majority of those present would have been puzzled to say how many moons there were, yonder in the serene blue above Beavers' Lodge.

This chief of his exploits completed his popularity. Such numbers of people flocked to the gardens, he made money fast. If the uncomfortable Phineas ventured to ask for any, the old man replied that he was taking care of it for him. Mr Beaver's care was to look after the pounds for himself, and the pence for his dear boy Phineas.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SAUL WEIR'S TREASURE.

WORK went on in much the old quiet way at Saul Weir's, and life was so calm it might never have been disturbed by troubling riches.

Saul had wellnigh forgotten them ;—he thought neither of the wealth he had forfeited, nor the good he had done.

That most unpleasant duty—appearing against Boggis and Blim, then later, Jebeson and Company—was got through with hearty relief, and without sparing them in the least. Saul was very merciful, but also, unfortunately for criminals, very just.

In connection with the prosecution of the former, he made Figg a handsome acknowledgment. Timothy himself was, perhaps, no better than he should be, but he took the guerdon as a tribute to virtues not yet developed.

Mr Figg had taken a place of business near Old Kent Road, for the sale of string, cord, twine, painters' brushes, size, putty, brown paper, soap, and other useful articles, and Mr Weir put him a little in the way of it. Mrs Figg attended to the shop, for Timothy (to help to increase their small income) had obtained a situation as office-messenger.

Jemima had greatly improved in manners and appearance, and would have done very well but for that discreditable individual Mrs Tottles, who would look in unevenly, to make a clearance of the money taken for the day. If Jemima opposed proceedings her mother bombarded her with the string-balls, as violently as when she used to charge with those extraordinary productions she called her oysters.

Apart from this drawback the speculation thrived, for Timothy was a young man of business experience, with some knowledge of the world, and what he did not know he guessed.

Figg heard no more of Ranger, whose interesting pursuit was brought to a standstill by the turn of events. Ranger was a man of depth, cosily cunning in his own little corner of artifice, and he bore his reverses with becoming gravity—even compelled the public to support him in living down misfortune; and the grateful public, always appreciative of past services, supported him liberally in so doing. Slippery as Herne himself, he appeared in many places, in no place long, and was invariably remembered after he had left. He still affected the woodlands and quiet hamlets where people lived in the midst of geese and donkeys, and were prepared to trust strangers with their all. And it would never do in any well-regulated scheme of existence for a gentleman of this persuasion to come to the end of his tether; the personage appears to be a necessity for the enlivening of dull places.

But to return to Saul Weir.

There may be as much excellent wisdom between the walls of a house as between the covers of a book, and verily the carpenter illustrated it—his life was a living epistle. Some people possess as much virtue as a cat, who does not eat the bird because he cannot spring so high. Mr Weir's quality was not of this stamp. If the rays of his perfection were traced they would be found to proceed from extraordinary abstinence; this he held to be the greatest of all virtues, because in it all other virtues are comprised. Wise, without possessing talent; clever, without possessing genius. And perhaps this was the happier destiny, since about the path of genius hangs a very halo of suffering and sensitive longing, which neither fame allays nor disappointment destroys. Besides, what is genius? The subtle immensity which is an universe in itself, yet that lights up a little fragment of mortality called *brain*. What is this planet that we see condensed to a mere taper, yet retaining all the splendour and the brilliancy of its heavenly nature? A flash in the eye! A

beam on the brow! A note higher strung may betray it. It planned Rome, preserved Rome empress, and at the present day disturbs Rome in motley garb certainly not put together without it. It is in the severe perfection and cold majesty of the grand untinted sculpture of Athens: in writings that flash with the fire of classic days and awaken the latent *elan* of the soul. It peopled the cave of the goblins at the base of Ben Venue with sportive urisks, and gave us the sweetest old plaint of Scotland, "Johnnie Armstrong's Last Good Night."

And the man we tell of was content without it.

His wise experience served him in its stead. He was very humble. All the great minds of creation have been little in the presence of themselves. It did not trouble him because his generosity was wrongly understood. The delight which springs from a good action cannot be decreased by the carping of those to whom good actions are entirely unknown. There are degrees in the faculty of apprehending. While one man is going up a molehill, another will scale a mountain, and the chances are in favour of the latter obtaining the best view.

Some others found difficulty in understanding his conduct in regard to Daisy; that also could be left to take care of itself. Some things are best and more sacred not understood.

That cumbrous, ramshackle old coach, Opinion, never kept him awake rattling over the stones. How we should like to find a man like this Saul Weir, but we doubt we never shall!

The acts which build up our life often want cornering and making symmetrical, or the old coach will bump against them.

Judge him from a high standpoint, higher than we can mount to on the top of that coach. Love is determined by its purity; there is no beating that. Pure love outlasts itself.

And it was very sweet. He would look up from his work at her beautiful head bent over a book, and think rapturously, "Mine! Without man or woman to say me nay, withdraw it from me, or sneer upon my fondness. Mine! Without the fear of man or woman stealing it from me. Mine, my very own!" And she could not understand why he was so tremulous if at any time she was ill.

It soon gets about if a man has done generously. One of the Islington magnates waited upon him with an invitation to do generously again,—something in the local charity way. It was very kind, but the man really had not got it to give. He said, "Circumstances alter cases, Mr Magnate, and this case is altered by my circumstances being reduced." Mr Magnate went away and gave the man credit for a sombre intensity of sarcasm. Wholly undeserved. He might as well have given him credit for being the bishop of a haughty palatinate, or for having that mystic relic the Black Rood of Scotland in his possession. There was as little sarcasm as humour about Saul Weir. He was solely a man of thought and of work; and work has its courtly service, its knightly obedience. An earlier man was not put into the Garden of Eden to lie on its rose-leaves all day long, but "to dress it and to keep it."

Nothing brings out aspect so well as contrast. When Saul Weir centred his hopes upon Daisy Sylvester, and made up his mind to stand by her, the fragile, beautiful delicacy of the young life made his great rugged nature seem of still mightier tension.

He was always ready to learn of her. Men of all ranks are too fond of teaching. If a third of them would but assume the meekness of disciples, what an improvement would be seen in the world!

He did not possess that stupendous intellect and that polished vulgarity which ignores the common. But it is a canon of his order to preserve unstained the escutcheon of the soul, to quarter thereon the true dignity of rectitude.

In the highly favoured land that luxuriated in one great stretch of beauty, sumptuous and poetic, between the Ionian, Mediterranean, and Ægean seas, arose a people of simple habits but exquisite tastes, that generally improved the whole earth. Wisdom, not wealth, was the impetus of the civilization of Greece. It induced a refinement utterly at variance with barbarism however gorgeous, and originated the Laurel Crown, the most honourable and chaste ambition that any people or nation has witnessed. Of as simple habits and

as exquisite tastes, and with that sole ambition, Weir honoured learning, and was an honour to it. If time shall encircle his brow with some hardly-earned reward, never a man will have deserved it more, or have toiled the steep ascent with a greater faithfulness.

Earnestly as he strove to make himself wise he sought to make the children wise also. That constant ensample bade fair to form peerless ones of them, and if they catch half his wise thought and tenderness they will become valuable in their day. The carpenter's shop is the scene of a fine routine of daily work and daily wisdom. The master, with his great, grave headship and handplay, and his always kind patience in teaching, moulds the intelligence of his pupils to the happiest results. His mode, *dégaé* and pleasant, invites confidence and communicates the self-possession necessary to success. They learn by his system, not of, but with him; and one day will know as much as though the curriculum had been under the shadow of Heber's tree at Oxford. Of types fourfold and manifold, Scriptural, Attic, Roman, Saxon, this man's nature was of primitive massiveness, which not all its cultivation would ever modernize.

Occasionally there were visitors to the carpenter's shop,—those to whom the scent of his deal shavings was as an aroma of exceeding richness, the spelling of their curled white letters on the floor one of exceeding preciousness.

Ada came sometimes. It was worth her journey to witness the pleasure it gave to her sister. We can wellnigh hear the beat of Daisy's heart as the sun breaks in at her window and awakens her, like a bird, to sing the whole day through. Oh, those were glorious days! Only, the old clock *would* go so crawlingly before Ada came, and so naughtily quick while she was there. Saul, too, was pleased when Ada came, for he entertained great respect for Daisy's sister (not regard, Mlle. Bernardin).

As Ada saw an improvement in Daisy each time she visited her, and discerned that wonderful care for his treasure, she felt more than ever satisfied on her sister's account. True, there were those embers of her own repressed passion, fanned

by hearing of his fine qualities, and witnessing his marvellous tenderness. And they filled her life with a subdued glory, lustreless yet luminous; and she walked as one might at the altar of one's peace. The calm nature and the common-sense, rendered her chastened experience the means to an end of the very highest order.

She thought him so different to anybody else, so altogether unapproachable, that for such a prize ever to have fallen to her meek retiring self would have seemed to her as injustice, she felt so little worthy of it. Like the blue and gold of grand evenings in summer-land, her life presented great contrasts of emotion, which, without touching, blended into a harmony of repose. Ada was more thoughtful in her country walks now; and hers had always been that gentleness of thought identified with those observant powers that ever seek and find in each wayside walk some source of gladness. She would let the children run on, all a-racing after butterflies and gorgeous moths, and while quiet by hedgerows and undisturbed leafy lanes, would muse tenderly, always of one theme. Sometimes she took Archie Campbell's poems. The wounded spirit finds comfort and meaning in poetry others fail to notice. Poetry is always of varying natures—its riches require extracting with measure according to necessity. The pages of poetry well searched shall be new life to saddened hearts, and the vibrating of music upon harps whose every string has snapped. Around in the world there is strange murmuring of broken joys and the refrain of weary loves, and these made metrical often supply sympathy, or what looks like it. The mind that can stoop to love the little sundew, with its fiery fibres and pellucid lips, will not be above gleaning comfort either from nature or from poetry; indeed they often go together. Sadness is no more than a great unsatisfied, refined regret, softened shadowing of things too tender for the full light of day; and nowhere is this passion ministered to but in the pages of Scripture, of Nature, and of Poetry. Bind these books up in one, and you are stronger and happier than the angels.

Archie's poems had been written long ago, but they seemed ever new to Ada. Such lyrics are undying. It is only those

who spell the immortality over with their little lisping praise or censure who die like the insects.

And it was no wonder that the heart loving the wild flowers passed in daily walks should love poetry also. For poetry in itself is to literature what flowers are to the earth, the bright, the lovely, the humanizing,—that which appeals to higher sensibilities, the softening harmony of a great orchestra. It raises the toiler upwards, reveals glimpses of higher life in sweeter language, and wins wearied souls back to youth and freshness. Those tender thoughts of Archie were well written if only for the echo they were to find in this young heart. Like another Euphorion, he had risen from crag to crag, ever singing, until, when at the sky, upon the utmost height, wings budded from the slight fair form, and borne into eternal space, the song burst upon worlds unfettered.

And below, the genius which blame could not break and praise would not spoil, was recognized and revered. Yet his book thrilled her with sorrow to read, there was such an intensity of passionate music in the august march of its measure. She could but mark how the opera of this majestic pen throbbed with intense and passionate pain. Always an artist, Archie had never felt compelled to become a philosopher; but he was musician from beginning to end. She would measure out the music in these poems, and learn how a poet may be compelled to become a musician. And every poem was either a reproach or remonstrance, or sad singing of some swift regret. She trod the deserted banqueting chambers and echoing halls of vanished hopes, with a far-off strain of maddening music that was half a pleading song and half a reproof of tender wounded love. Subtle were the gleams of tremulous pain in which this soul seemed steeped as in a bath of deadly perfume. Cragged and rugged were the heights of shrouded danger scaled in the face of blinding lightning. Lone the tracks on unlighted seas, with the wail of wet winds hunting the soul in the night. Yet with it all there was beautiful aspiration and an exquisite longing, but no peace, no peace!

Hugh Edred also visited the carpenter, but not often; London

was too crowded for his liking. He must have great breadths of air, and wide reaches of scene; cabined and confined space troubled him. Away in Suffolk he could luxuriate at will on breezy uplands, attending to his farm, and in broad pastures looking after his stock.

He took up with the life vigorously, having learned its rudiments in a great Western school. He introduced curious customs though, and planted grain which caused the old-fashioned agriculturists to open their eyes. They brought their hands down with emphasis, said he was playing ducks and drakes with the estate, and altogether looked as blue as if they had seen a comet. The new Squire was not quite such an easy one as the last; he would not be talked to, nor talked about, if he knew it. He pursued his way. It proved a right one, and Edred of the Herongate brought about a revolution in Suffolk farming.

With the sons of honest John Clark, their new landlord cultivated closer acquaintance. He had known them when lads, had competed with them in feats of strength, and now that he knew them as men he saw much in them to like. They were finer fellows now than ever they had been at cricket or football; finer fellows than when they danced attendance upon their fawn-like, mischievous, but pretty cousin. They looked none the less ruddy for the loss of their sweetheart, but be sure that deep down in their hearts was a tender remembrance. They never mentioned her. By tacit consent they were as though cousinless, and *that* they felt with a vengeance. There was grievous softening of their manly selves if they gave themselves up to thinking of it. John Clark felt her loss in a different way—a worse way; he experienced a sense of desolateness, for she had been so much to him. He would sit in the old place, drawing long reflective whiffs, looking vacantly at the curling smoke and thinking of her, hoping she was happy. And when her notes came to say so it gladdened him, and he rejoiced, for he was not a selfish man.

So soon as the country people became reconciled to the new Squire (there are always those who dislike such changes

for a time) they admitted he began with a kindly reconstitution of privileges. They were to have all the rabbits, and fish from the stream. He allowed them wood. Those who had large families might once a-week have vegetables from the kitchen-garden. The poor old women were to live free in their cottages. He did not raise the men's wages above those paid by Mr Masheter, nor lower rentals, because it would have made the labourers of adjoining farms discontented ; but he opened up benefits of various kinds in which all might participate. And the owner of the Herongate came to be thought well of by the poor, if not by neighbouring land-owners.

Edred made the parents of Herrick an offer to teach him farming, and as the boy liked the idea he was allowed to join the settler again, this time in the East. It was a source of pleasure to both, and Herrick's restless nature met with wholesome control. And when these two went to London to see their friends, great were the rejoicings. Saul lived handy for the Agricultural Hall, and it was usually in Cattle Show week that this stalwart breeder of stock liked to go. A refreshing week, when a flood of country air seems to pervade the metropolis—squires' gala, the country gentleman's heyday.

Hugh Edred sent many a genuine farmhouse hamper to the carpenter's home ; choice fruit and flowers, and creature comforts without end. Much Daisy enjoyed unpacking, so much, the carpenter paused at his work to watch her pleasure. Daisy said it was worth living in London, if only for the pleasure of having parcels from the country. Merry did not forget them either ; his orchard yielded of its best for them—he even spared some of his beautiful roses.

Thus the house in Essex Road was always country-like with its flowers and gay decoration of blossoms. Where possible, on walls and stands he had fixed rural boxes, and holders for plants and creepers ; these were trailing everywhere, and made the place like a bower. The trellis-work he put up on going there was covered with foliage. Boxes were at all the windows, and the sweet breath of mignonette purified the air coming in. Throughout, the house was made elegant, and a

proof of what a pair of hands may do towards garnishing a humble dwelling.

Well, then, they had other visitors. Old Mr Grattan and his granddaughter came at intervals to see them, always welcome guests. Son-like and tender was Saul, and finely regardful of the old man's comfort. If he would, he might discourse on those wise deep truths which made his learning precious; but Weir did not trouble him to talk—he wished the change beneficial rather than irksome. The old scholar was quite happy again; tremulous at the crossings, and distracted by the confusion, but strong with the old vigorous intellect in the quiet of the little sitting-room. Agnes took great care of him when abroad; he always had her with him; there was no apprehension on his part, but an instinctive feeling that it was quite as well.

Agnes liked those visits. Her candid disposition expanded in that atmosphere of candour, and she and Mr Weir learnt to respect each other well before they had done with it.

Francis Grattan brought parcels of books with him, likely to be of use to the student. Thus Saul Weir's store accumulated, and he gave up buying more, thinking that enough was as good as a feast.

He was saving too; putting by earnings for the future, one day to provide a country home for his treasure.

Sometimes Rupert Redland came up to town to see his uncle, and he would run in for an hour, always bringing some dainty gift packed by the motherly hands of Mrs Potter. Daisy undid these baskets with shy delicacy, but lost all hesitation when she discovered layers of fragrant flowers from the walls of the fairy cottage.

Rupert was making progress in the world—his era of embarrassments had long since passed away. Contributions to philosophical journals had brought him into more prominent notice, and abundance of work ensued. Oliver Redland, who had returned to the paths of humanity, and recovered the position his scientific research entitled him to, was now a good friend to his nephew, endeavouring in some degree to atone for past neglect. A startling illustration of his theory,

that one in pursuit of science should feel no weariness. He had stood at that solemn turning in his life, when after the long pilgrimage, followed with tremendous energy, he saw it a mistaken course throughout, a way of ashes—strewn over the best portion of his life: then he put the bleak disappointment behind him, and with astonishing vigour for so old a man, resumed those legitimate investigations which made his name, and which would always command him respect.

The carpenter's shop was the humble centre of attraction to others than those named. Mr Masheter also called when in London, and generally in the company of his daughter, who would on no account have left without seeing their good physician. No words may describe the refined gratitude experienced by Miss Masheter towards the friend who had rendered so signal a service. She was restored to comparative health by his instrumentality, and only those know the blessing of such a restoration who have been sufferers for many weary years. Of course she was nervously susceptible to shocks, to changes of temperature, to atmospheric oppression and the like, but still was wonderfully better, enabled to take more active interest in life, and enjoy healthful exercise.

Kind-hearted, easy-natured, pliable Cobham Masheter, blessed the Treasure and all about it. He firmly believed, had it not been for that, his daughter would still have remained his invalid. And there seemed a rounded completion about the fact of her cure having been the work of him to whom belonged the riches slumbering in that vale where she had met with her accident.

He could not quite understand a nature like that of Saul Weir, as belonging to an artizan, but there it was, and he honoured it. A conservative English gentleman, he had his pride and his prejudices; but when a phenomenon like this was forced upon recognition, his own noble character prompted admiration for the more noble character of another.

If ever a man felt that he was honestly believed in, and sincerely thought well of, that man should be Saul Weir. But as we have seen again and again, opinion was nothing to him;

he knew that it veers like the wind. It was what he thought about himself weighed far more with him. He was scrupulously careful and consistent in living up to a standard of self-approval. In truth, he realised that grand thought in "Festus"—

"He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

He elevated his self-chosen lot, made dignity of it, with the imperishable crown of learning—greater than any other earthly honour. It was the pure and truthful life, and the patiently acquired wisdom, that raised him, and would continue to raise him until his beautiful life was ready to shuffle off this mortal coil, and take upon it the immortality he had always honoured.

Dr Virgil also entertained a high opinion of Saul Weir. Quick and correct at character-reading, that of the carpenter had surprised him into the most cordial esteem. Twice a-year, during college vacation time, Penryllon went to stay with his old master. The Doctor remarked with gratitude and pleasure, that so far from the boy going back in his learning he made the most satisfactory progress. The Doctor knew very well that the craft to which he had applied himself was often but the rude first step to refined development of invention and mechanism, and he thought Arthur could not possibly have found a better elementary beginning. Those holiday times were seasons of proud delight to Dr Virgil. The charm about his boy-friend did not decrease with age, as it so often does. Gentle of demeanour, considerate above all things, hours spent in his company were a lesson in manners. Arthur was in the right home for perpetuating the tenderness he always possessed. The Doctor was glad to see that gentleness apparent above any aspiration, he could not forget that Chatterton's splendid dreams ended with tragedy. He was glad the boy did not show ambition to join the young immortals, who lived such sad lives and died such sadder deaths.

The mention of Saul Weir's friends and well-wishers would be incomplete without including their kind neighbour Mlle.

Bernardin, who looked in every now and then to chatter about her business, her customers, and her customers' connections all round, so far as she knew them. Always good-hearted, impatiently full of praise, gently inconsiderate, teeming with amiable weaknesses, industriously full of business, and as ingenious as ever. Mlle. Bernardin was making profitable returns; taste is sure to rule in the long-run. Her ladies, as she called them, did not object to the pleasant play of her talk while that and her fingers glided smoothly together. Even when holding a pin between her dazzling teeth, she rippled on as easily, tossing and nodding or shaking her pretty head to lend point and expression. She firmly believes she is helping to mould and make her darling Daisy next door. Perhaps she is—youth is shaped by many influences; undoubtedly she has instructed Daisy in taste, so far as it applies to the mysteries of millinery.

But for disposition and character the child needed no moulding of any one. Each birthday saw brighter blossoming, while all unconsciously she grew into sensitive girlhood with great depth of thought and grave delicacy of mind, that were both inexpressibly charming. When engaged in gentle meditation, Saul would compare her in memory with that first well-remembered view when he had seen her kneeling in solitude, in the one ray of light, and that early glimpse of character seemed to give title to the whole life. He made her nature as deep a study as that of the books. She had faults, and so had he, and he would not have liked her without them; he would not then have felt good enough to be in her company. But he had the pleasure of seeing faults diminish in her, whatever they might do in himself. It will be as well to leave him a few, and, in spite of them, to point to what an English workman can do and be.

This then was the life at Saul Weir's, quiet, calm, and undisturbed; the equal round of his work stealing out on a London street, making music of toil, and an opera of contentment.

The world is full of lyrics, only we do not know how to transcribe them.

Saul was not one of those who walk through the world wearily, seeing men as shadows, taking no heed to form or outline, the whole display misty before the eyes, and sound but the distant hubbub of a fair. He entered into life, understanding and sympathising with it, none the less for his quiet mode of living it himself. That inner side to his character, which was so delicately retiring, courted no recognition, and was only anxious for a calm background; but from there it observed minutely and felt deeply. He gave tolerance, breadth, and unprejudiced vision to penetrating the space, time, and spirit of any theme having human nature for its burden. The great reasoning powers, with all their mighty training and vast pageantry of mental forces, may not discern with the clearness and sensibility of a heart like this; dispassionate, compassionate, unutterably kind, and not one to "force his way with curiosity into the holy of holies of a human soul."

Day to day saw his life idyllic. A thorough, trenchant life, full-orbed and finished; far as possible removed from the inferior qualities which find favour with the world; and with a heart capable of replying honestly to the Laureate's question:—

"Heart, are you great enough
For a love that never tires?"

THE END.

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